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Senate

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, one of those other programs that is now in crisis is what I want to switch to. I think my colleague was joking with me because we have—for anybody who is watching—we have a whole list of things we wanted to get to. My staff, now, seemingly very ambitious—Medicaid, Medicare, healthcare, Social Security is coming up now, tariffs and economic policy, education, national security, public safety, immigration, housing—chapter by chapter, each one about an hour or so. This would be enough to make it until tomorrow evening if I can stand that long and who knows?

But we are behind schedule. So I am going to jump in to talk about Social Security. I want to start because, as I said earlier, I get to stand here. I get to come to this floor, but so many millions of people don't. I want to elevate their voices tonight.

As I go across New Jersey, as I go across my Nation, I see Republicans, Democrats, Independents—there are so many people stopping me in airports, in the community, stopping me in the grocery store, wanting to tell me that they are afraid, that they are angry, that they are worried, that they believe we are in crisis, that our Nation is at a crossroads. Whom are we going to be as a nation?

This topic, I don't know, maybe I will just let you all know that this topic—my mom chewed into me about this topic. She lives in a senior citizen retirement community, mostly Republicans. I visited her many times. It is a great community. I hate how we go to this idea of right or left. These are great seniors that live in a great community, and they are talking about Social Security.

I want to read—start with this section by just reading—these are people sending to me. This is a small postcard, handwritten from somebody from Hamilton Square, NJ:

Dear Senator Booker, I am writing to ask you if my Social Security is now in danger.

Please let me know. It is very important to me. Thank you.

I am going to try to answer that tonight fairly and candidly. Here is another person who writes. My staff is protecting their identity. I just want to say where they are from. South Plains, NJ:

I am one of your constituents and a proud New Jerseyan. I am writing to let you know how upset, distraught, and worried I am about the current state of our country. I hope you will take time and read my letter as this is the first time I felt compelled to write a government official.

I want to tell you, I am reading your letter again, and I am now reading it on national TV, if C-SPAN can be—the Presiding Officer may challenge me with a factual error, but C-SPAN is national TV, I think.

I want to start by telling you a little about myself. I am 64 years old and I am currently working full time. I am a breast cancer survivor. My plan was to retire in the next 3 years, but with the current state of chaos and turmoil, I honestly don't see how I can retire. I am concerned about Medicare, which I will definitely need when I retire. I will also need a supplemental plan for whatever Medicare does not cover. I do not qualify for retirement benefits through my job. With the cuts being made to Federal programs, Medicare will not be enough. I would need a more expensive supplemental plan to cover these cuts.

I am also concerned about Social Security. I have worked since I was 16, except for 9 years when I was home with my three children.

I have worked hard and paid into Social Security and believed that the money was for my retirement. Now I hear that Social Security is a Ponzi scheme, and it may be privatized. This is so unfair for people like me that worked hard all their life and counted on this money to retire. I was planning to work past 65 to get my full Social Security benefits, but now I begin to wonder if it is worth it.

So, at this point, I am in a holding pattern due to the unstable climate in which we are all living. As I said, I have three children who are all adults now. My son has been diagnosed with being bipolar. He has been hospitalized a few times for this. He is currently

on medication that he needs to function and sees a therapist. He is in grad school and is on Medicaid. He works part time since he is a full-time grad student. So he does not qualify for benefits.

I worry about what these cuts will do to my son and others like him. No one seems concerned with the people who rely on these programs to live their best life. Someone needs to look out and take an interest in helping people in these circumstances.

My daughter is a teacher in a district that receives title I funds. She works very hard as a teacher and is devoted to her students. With the dismantling of the Department of Education, I am concerned about what this means to the education field, teachers, administration, and students. My daughter's school is making a difference in the lives of these students, and they need the funding that is received from both the State and Federal Government. Programs like the title I and other federally funded programs need to stay in place.

On another topic—

This constituent is getting a lot into her first letter to a government official, and I appreciate it.

On another topic, inflation: Increasing prices and the overpriced housing market is a huge problem. Placing tariffs on our biggest trade partners is beyond unfair. This drives the cost of goods up, and the consumer is the one who ends up paying the increase. A lot of families are food insecure, wondering where their next meal is coming from. A lot of parents go without so their children can eat. Food pantries and banks are scrambling to meet demand. Something needs to be done so families can survive.

The housing market is also an issue. Owning your own home is now unreachable for most young people starting out. Interest rates are high, and housing prices in New Jersey are unaffordable.

Thank you for reading my letter. I am asking you, as our Senator, please stand up for what is in the best interest of families, seniors, adults, and children in your district. Tariffs, dismantling Departments like Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Education, and other services that are important to the everyday person is not the answer. You are our voice in the Senate. Please do the right thing, and speak up, and continue to fight for everyday Americans.

This is why I am standing up. This is why I will stand here as long as I am

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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physically able. This is why I continue to tell story after story.

But, first, a little important history: 90 years. Our country has made a promise to people that, if you pay into the Social Security Program your whole life, your money will be there for you when you retire. Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law 84 years ago, and this is his quote. He called it “a cornerstone in a structure which is being built, but it is by no means complete.” Social Security is still a cornerstone. It is still the bedrock according to FDR. It is the bedrock of an edifice being built in a nation where we belong to each other. We the people are building this. That is our cornerstone. He called it Social Security. Today, 73 million Americans count on Social Security. Millions more than that are planning on those benefits they earned being there for them.

You heard from the first letters I read that people are really worried. The President of the United States stood up in the State of the Union Address and talked about rampant fraud because payments are going out. All from conservative papers to ones on the other side have shown that what he was saying was not true. But they are sowing chaos. They are attacking, delegitimizing it, and calling it a Ponzi scheme—DOGE leader Musk and the President.

There are 73 million Americans who are counting on Social Security benefits, and 1.6 million are in my State. Forty percent of the people who rely on Social Security—40 percent—have no other source of income. They live paycheck to paycheck—Social Security checks, excuse me. Social Security checks.

Despite mocking Social Security and calling it a Ponzi scheme, people in communities like my parents’—my mom’s—are beginning to worry. They actually took real actions to lay off thousands of Social Security employees, making it harder to process Social Security applications and troubleshoot questions from beneficiaries. They didn’t roll out a plan to say: Hey, this is how we are going to show that we can give the best customer service ever. We are going to bring in some of the best private sector people to advise on how we can use technology and innovation to give the best customer service. Hell, roll in AI, and do all of these things. We are going to make a model of responsiveness to our seniors because we are a society that respects our elders, values them, wants them to retire in dignity and security and peace of mind. That is the big ambition.

No, that is not what was said.

Social Security employees, like many employees, got letters that they didn’t expect, saying they were laid off. It didn’t matter how well they performed, and it didn’t matter what function they performed. It put in jeopardy just trying to contact Social Security, if you are retired or just trying to con-

tact Social Security if you need to apply for benefits. They tried to eliminate service by phone, saying that they wanted to require in-person visits, which is absurd for many seniors who don’t have access to transportation or who live in rural areas because—do you know what they are doing also? They are trying to close down many Social Security offices, and I will get to the specifics of that later.

These actions are harmful enough, but they are just the beginning of what our President and Elon Musk are saying they want to do to a program that, for millions of Americans, is their only check a week. It is essential for them and for others. It is how they make their retirement secure. You don’t protect the future by punishing the people who built this country. You don’t fix America by throwing seniors or veterans or Americans with disabilities under the bus. That is not how we do things. That is not how we should do things. There are so many hard-working families who believe in this idea of, if I work hard all my life in America, I can make ends meet; I can raise my kids; and I can retire with dignity.

Congress does have a responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. We should do more of that. I want to do more of that. I want to help lead in that fight. But none of us were invited to the table when it came to this. This congressionally established program—FDR I read—but it was Congress that established it and is now not being included in the planning or in the procedures to try to improve Social Security or to make it more efficient or more effective. We haven’t convened hearings or task forces in a bipartisan way to find out what we can do to better serve our seniors.

Instead, lies are being proffered about Social Security making wrongful payments. Lies are being proffered by the highest office in the land and by the most rich person in the land, who does not need Social Security, who is calling it a Ponzi scheme, who is telling people who are relying on it that they are part of a Ponzi scheme.

But remember this: Social Security is not the government’s money to spend. It is the hard-earned savings of working Americans, and it belongs to Americans. The President and Elon Musk need to keep their hands off of it. It is not theirs to take, and it is not theirs to break.

It is their scheme. They are the ones who have a scheme, and it is not about efficiency. It is not visionary. What we need in America now are visionary leaders who have bold, exciting visions for things like what Social Security can be. What they are doing is not only wrong, but it hurts people; it scares people. And it is not just people but our elders—the people who raised us, the people who built roads and highways, the people who served food, made food, who started small businesses, who raised generations. They are who we are disrespecting.

So what happens in this context? Why am I standing here?

It is because the people of New Jersey are saying: Why aren’t you doing more? This is unacceptable, Senator BOOKER. It is unacceptable. Hear our voices.

My phones have exploded with people whom the President and Elon Musk have made terrified about what is happening to the Social Security service and what is happening to their checks. My staff said that we were overwhelmed with phone calls and emails from people who were worried about the direction that the President is taking Social Security. The people who called were angry or terrified, and I want to share some of these calls from my constituents.

Here is someone from the great Cherry Hill, NJ:

I am very concerned that the President, along with his cruel and inept administration and DOGE, are working to privatize and ruin the Social Security Program.

I am a constituent, Senator Booker. I live in Cherry Hill, NJ, and I am a senior who relies on Social Security income for my basic needs, food, and housing. The mere idea of not having those funds has caused me sleepless nights and wondering if I will become homeless.

I am going to stop there for a second.

I remember President FDR and growing up hearing that what he did was get on the radio not to stir up fear, not to stir up chaos, but to comfort people, to remind them that we are Americans, and you have no need to fear. But this President, just with his rhetoric alone about Social Security, is driving my constituents to write me notes like this.

I continue with the letter from my constituent from Cherry Hill:

I hope you will convince both Democrat and Republican colleagues to prevent this from happening. Trump lied when he promised during his campaign he would not touch the Social Security Administration, but now we see threats and already some actions toward making severe cuts and making the program less accessible. I urge you to continue to fight for us.

(Mr. CRAMER assumed the Chair.)

Pennington, NJ:

My sister and I are older Americans who are each disabled—one from a severe accident because of a drunk driver and the other from a life-changing illness. We are alone and take care of each other. For me, SSDI is my one and only income. I have a few years before I am at full retirement age. Even with my check and splitting rent costs between us, it is taking right under 50 percent of my monthly check for rent alone.

Fifty percent.

This does not leave much to cover even the bare necessities of health, vehicle insurance, utilities, food, medicine—even a tight budget, especially with costs on everything continuing to rise.

Senator, as seniors, we are petrified about what is happening to SSA. I must ask you, Senator: What do we do if our monthly SSA benefits are interrupted? How do we keep a roof over our heads as disabled seniors? With very limited savings, it would only take a few months before the roof over our heads would be in jeopardy. We just spent a small

fortune for us to move into a smaller, lower cost apartment because we could not afford significant ongoing rent increases. I realize we are far from alone in our fears, but that is of very little comfort as we spend our nights unable to sleep, fearful we do not lose our only income along with a roof over our heads.

These are our elders.

Here is a constituent from Egg Harbor Township:

My husband and I live Social Security check to Social Security check. Without those checks we earned—without those checks we earned—we are dead. Please don't let this outrageous administration take our benefits away.

This is a constituent from Runnemede, NJ:

I am a 75-year-old New Jersey resident. I received my working papers in 1964, at the age of 14. I worked continuously until I reached the age of 70, in 2020. I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1967 and retired in 1999. I was on Active Duty from 1970 to 1977. I finished my career in the Naval Reserve. For 56 years, I paid my taxes and contributed to Social Security.

I have collected my Social Security for 4 years, and as you are no doubt aware, the amount of money paid me monthly by the Social Security Act was calculated by them based on my contribution.

I am currently a full-time, 24/7 caretaker for my invalid wife and do not have the luxury of earning a supplemental income. My sole income is from Social Security and a small Naval Reserve pension. My total healthcare comes from Medicare and TRICARE for Life.

The contract I made with the United States Government was that they could use my money during my working life with the understanding that they would take care of me when I could no longer earn for myself. I have kept my part of this bargain for 56 years. Now, after only 4 years, the government is threatening to renege on our agreement.

Please, sir, do not let this happen. Senator Booker. That is my money. I earned it. I earned my Social Security by my contributions, and I earned my pension by my service.

Another constituent named Sara:

I have been a teacher in Atlantic County for 26 years. My husband is a 100-percent disabled veteran who receives VA disability payments as well as SSDI. We depend on the VA and SSDI for approximately half of our income for our family of five.

We are currently preparing our oldest for his first year at college and are awaiting financial aid packages from several schools. We are petrified that Trump and Musk's agenda is dangerous and will have life-altering consequences for families like ours.

We are counting on you, Senator Booker, to do the hard work to protect the essential benefits.

The destruction of the Department of Education is another completely horrifying situation. We need to protect our special needs students and Federal financial aid for college-bound students. We need to protect the idea that education is for all—

Education is for all. Education is for all—instead of a few elites who could just afford it.

Rosie is another constituent. She starts off proudly:

I am a senior, 84 years old.

God bless you, Rosie. My mom is 85.

My only income is Social Security—

She generously gives me confidential information.

My only income is Social Security, \$1,179 per month, and I am terrified that the current gang of thieves in the White House will tamper with it under the guise of "saving money." If Social Security is cut off, I am on the streets.

I can't keep harping enough on the traditions of our country, where Presidents, whether you agree with them or not, whether they are from your party or not—Ronald Reagan didn't whip up fear in bedrock commitments like Social Security or health. Barack Obama didn't shake people so that Republicans and Democrats in my State would write me letters using words like "fear" and "terror," would worry about losing sleep when they have enough things to stress over.

Here is Debra:

I am a retired widow. I depend on Social Security to pay bills each month. I am concerned about the reports that Elon Musk is to revamp and, in my opinion, ruin the Social Security Administration. I am worried that payments will be disrupted. There are many other things going on in the government today that I am also concerned about. I hope that the Senators and Congress people, along with the judicial system, can stand up to him and take back control of government.

She says this is going to revamp and ruin Social Security. This is just somebody simply saying—it is like, be plain. Don't make up lies about false payments. Don't call it a Ponzi scheme. Give us a bold vision of how it is going to help more seniors, how you are going to serve more seniors, how you are going to improve the system, how you are going to make it better, how you are going to serve the dignity of our seniors.

This is Holly. Holly is a constituent too.

I am one of your constituents who is retired and relies 100 percent in order to live on my earned Social Security benefit in which I paid throughout my entire working career. I call on you to maintain the Social Security Program as it stood before the ascension of Trump and Musk. You must ensure that there are no missed earned benefit payments or late payments made to recipients; especially, accessible Social Security offices must remain open and fully staffed with trained, experienced Social Security employees in order to provide the kind of regular, necessary customer service by phone, online, and in person.

And the Trump-Musk administration's endless terrorist threats of dismantling the Social Security Administration, insidiously calling it a Ponzi scheme, working in order to privatize it—it must cease and desist immediately.

Moreover you, Cory Booker, must reverse and/or stop whatever draconian changes are being made to destroy the Social Security Administration with thousands of cuts to needed employees with almost no notice and no public input.

Social Security is being dismantled by an unelected billionaire. At least for now, Musk and his band of DOGE boys—not a real government department—who have illegally and callously rifled through our most private, personal information and done God knows

what with it, with their ultimate goal to risk and/or steal the retirement funds of older Americans by placing the Social Security Trust Fund in the hands of private corporate equity firms—seniors do not agree to this. Seniors do not agree to this. Such action is illegal and completely unacceptable!

This constituent continues:

Furthermore, I am deeply concerned that the ceaseless chaos will invite criminals to exploit confusion around identity verification. Ironically, while the administration claims these changes are meant to combat fraud, they may very well do the opposite. Hastily introducing new, unfamiliar technology and verification steps without any real public education campaign will create the perfect environment for criminals to deceive and defraud.

This late and ill-conceived change also comes at a time when the Social Security Administration is already struggling with a customer service crisis, long hold times, low staffing, delayed callback systems, confusing announcements about possible office closures. This chaos has to be stopped now, Senator Booker.

I urgently ask you to please use your congressional power to reverse these changes which are creating more confusion for older Americans. Senior Americans earned Social Security through a lifetime of hard, honest work. I know I did. The money is ours, and we deserve a properly run Social Security Administration which continues to be administered honestly through the Federal Government, as established in 1935.

In fact, the narrative of the Social Security Act running out of money could be easily fixed if Congress wrote laws that slightly increased the amount that high-net-worth individuals—the wealthiest of the wealthy—paid into the program.

Holly, God bless you.

My mother, in her senior community, is seeing this rise in scammers trying to steal people's money, and she is amazed at the technology they are using. The scams involve the voices of their relatives asking them for help during a crisis. All that technology and the wisdom of my mom—she is like, why aren't we using the technology and innovations to make Social Security easier to use and easier to engage with? Commonsense questions.

Carli, a constituent from New Jersey:

Please include disabled people when you talk about Social Security and Medicare, Senator Booker. You don't mention us every time. I paid into Social Security for 16 years. I worked full time. I was sick almost every day. I finally had to leave my job in 2015. I was granted SSDI, and I am on Medicare. And until I was injured last year, I had a part-time job, where I continued paying into the system.

I fear that the first people they will go after are the disabled. We are not as capable of fighting. People see us as lazy or fakers, and we are almost never included in the conversations about marginalized communities. Please don't let me be erased.

Carli, you are not. I see you, and I am standing here for as long as I physically can so that I can elevate your voice and others'.

Patricia, a constituent from New Jersey:

I am 65 years old, a senior. I have worked my whole life and paid into Social Security. Will you please work hard and push back to preserve these benefits? Without Social Security money and Medicare as well, I will not survive. I am outraged—

Patricia writes—
to see what is happening recently. Help. If there is anything you request of me—

My constituent says: If there is anything you need of me, please let me know.

That is one of the most beautiful sentiments in America, is that people in crisis who are racked with fear and worry still are standing up to volunteer, retired seniors.

I am always moved when a constituent not only tells me what is on their mind, how they are angry, how they are worried, what their concerns are, but they also say: Let me help you. Let me help you.

Patricia, it is late at night, and you are probably sleeping, but you helped me tonight at 12:41 a.m.

The goodness and the decency of our seniors, the kindness and generosity of our communities, and what does our President do to these people? He spends time in the State of the Union Address not calling us together, not calling us to a common cause, not reminding us that we share common values and common virtues; he spreads lies about Social Security and unleashes the wealthiest man in the world to cut before he even understands the Agencies he is cutting—a guy who, with the same kind of cynical nature—I can't even fathom being as wealthy as he is; it is not what I have sought in my life—he calls it a Ponzi scheme when constituent after constituent tells me that is their only source of income, that they paid into it all of their lives, and now the most powerful person on the planet and the richest person on the planet are striking fear and worry into seniors.

Yet, with all of that power, all of that money, a constituent from New Jersey tells me about what she is concerned with and then says:

If there is anything you request of me, please let me know. I am here to help.

“I am here to help.”

That is the country I know and love, not the fearmongers and the demagogues and the spreaders of lies but the good decency of Americans who, even in their time of crisis, ask the question: How can I help? How can I help.

Helen from New Jersey:

Senator Booker, please stand up to Musk and Trump to save, protect Social Security and Medicare. My life and my husband's life depend on it. We are senior citizens who worked and paid our share of taxes for over 50 years. We now need those benefits to survive.

Here is Janet, one of the hundreds—I am sorry to my staff—thousands of people who have written, emailed, and called. One more. Janet:

I oppose the closing of Social Security field offices. If anything, more field services should be opened if phone support is cut back.

In 2022, while living in Wyoming, I started on Social Security. There were issues, and thank God for the local field office in Cheyenne because they were the only people who could physically look at my documentation, realize what was happening to me, submit

corrections, and enter notes in the system that the Social Security phone support could see. It took four or five trips to my local field office to resolve it.

I had previously gotten nowhere with Social Security phone support. Today, I read the list of field offices that are slated to be closed, and they appear to be in rural areas.

The people who live there might have to drive a full day's drive several times to apply for and follow up on their benefits. It is not fair. It is not fair. It is not fair. It is not fair.

Across the country—my office hears from—it is not just New Jersey. Across the country, people are frustrated and feel like nobody listens. We get calls from across the country. My staff doesn't say: You are not from New Jersey, so we are not going to talk to you. My staff is just incredible people I have surrounding me in the office who remind me of the values I treasure.

So they wanted me to include tonight people not from New Jersey because, again, we hear from thousands of people in my State and so many around the country.

Here is Maria Caranci from Springfield, Delaware County, PA:

My name is Maria Caranci.

Forgive me, Maria, if I am pronouncing your name wrong.

I am 78 years old and live in Springfield, Delaware County, PA.

When I was 16, I received my first paycheck and saw money was taken from my earnings. I learned that about FICA, the special government savings account that I would put part of my earnings into until I retired. This was how I could pay bills in my old age. It was something I could always count on. My earnings history shows the good and bad times, including the gaps when I received unemployment.

My chosen career was in mortgage banking. Banking mergers, dramatic changes to interest rates, and even bank lending regulations meant times of unemployment with few options or jobs or accepting temp employment. I had to make the choice.

Every paycheck withheld FICA. I was almost 65 when I began my career at the bank offering decent pay with overtime. It was 2010. I had two goals to meet for my retirement: a mortgage-free home and working until I was 70, earning the maximum benefit.

Underwriters that I worked with had shown me what they felt added security to my personal finances. So I was diligent with setting up my emergency savings account. It would be there for anytime my Social Security check didn't cover my expenses on my home or me getting older. So I often worked until 10 p.m. at night, delayed taking days off, making goals possible.

The Social Security Administration sent information about my future benefit payments, so I made a budget and determined my escrow for taxes, insurance, and home maintenance to be taken from my benefit.

I knew how much I would have per week for my living expenses once my mortgage was paid. I used the overtime income from my emergency savings account. Everything relies on my receipt of my monthly check from Social Security.

The recent assault on Social Security has me terrified. People who were not elected, vetted, or made to swear an oath to protect our U.S. Constitution have taken our personal data, saying that they are searching for fraud. Errors are being made with this new regime and no clear resolution in sight.

Why do they need my personal information that includes my Social Security number,

work history, and bank information? In February, my identity was stolen. When thieves moved my mail using a postcard sent to USPS, my bank statement and a copy of my paycheck were forwarded to the thieves before I got the USPS notice of the change.

I froze my credit then and have done so later since TransUnion has the Bose address listed as a fraudulent one on part of their report but also has another address for mail that have to be returned to the sender.

I have quit fighting the data entry mistake, but I remain diligent and alert if mail is due and doesn't arrive. What can I do about this new group of identity thieves known as DOGE?

Until recently, I had confidence in my ability to provide for myself because I lived in the United States of America, a republic governed by the people, for the people.

My parents were children of the Great Depression. So they instilled in me how to be financially solid and survive. Now, at 78, I am learning everything that I hold dear is to be attacked by the 47th President using a contributor to his reelection as his adviser and the leader of a group named DOGE.

I do not feel safe, due to cuts in so many that have kept us safe—cuts in the CDC; cuts in the FBI; cuts in the EPA; cuts in the FAA and Social Security.

I worry about losing our foreign allies and the release of convicted domestic terrorists pardoned by the President while suspected immigrants might be whisked away before anyone even knows they are.

Everyone I know receiving Social Security benefits relies on those payments for their daily life. As prices increase under President Trump's leadership, many are not as fortunate as me who had a solid plan for increased expenses. We worked, putting into FICA with every paycheck that we received.

The thought of delaying payments or making errors so that anyone must prove their right to receive their benefit is stealing from people. Are we still the land of the free and the home of the brave? I am counting on our elected officials like you and the courts to preserve it.

Lisa Bogacki, Fleetwood, PA:

Hello. My name is Lisa. I live in Fleetwood, PA. 15 years ago, my healthy 42-year-old husband was found deceased on our couch by our then-13-year-old son. Our 10-year-old and 3-year-old stood quietly crying on the stairs.

Sudden cardiac death was the cause. The same day, my daughter asked if we would need to move to another house. I promised her—promised her—that I would do everything I could to keep them in the only home they had ever known. Those early days remain blurred in my mind.

I remember my father taking me to the Social Security office, and shortly thereafter, survivor's benefits for my children began showing up in the bank account to assist with their care. If not for these benefits, I would not have been able to keep my promise to my children.

It is not much money, amounting to roughly the salary of a minimum-wage job. Yet it was a lifeline to some piece of normalcy for my family, not a Ponzi scheme.

My kids have now aged out of the system. I am about to begin widow's benefits as my body cannot continue multiple jobs as a physical therapist, which I needed to do to make ends meet for myself and family.

Social Security benefits were essential to the care and being of raising my children. It was a promise from their father who had paid into the system his entire working life. We must work on continuing to expand these essential benefits and never consider dismantling or privatizing them.

Thank you, Senator Booker.

Here is Kayanna Spooner from Chippewa Falls, WI, who writes me:

My name is Kayanna Spooner, and I live in Chippewa Falls, WI. I am 63 years old. My husband Joe and I have five children and three grandchildren and live a wonderful life as our family is growing.

God bless you and your family.

We own businesses and work to contribute Social Security for ourselves and our employees. We did all the things we could do to secure our future and contribute to the larger community of those in need.

We felt that we were living the American dream until one day in 2012—

I know this personally—my dad. I feel for you, Ms. Spooner—

until one day in 2012, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's disease is a degenerative brain disease that progresses over time.

Sorry. I am thinking about my dad.

It is unrelenting and affects motor and nerve processes.

Loss of benefits will have a direct and daily effect on me and my family as we navigate the medical needs we will be facing. I will need comprehensive care as I age. I will need medication every single day of my life, and I will need the security of a generous society to care for me.

Millions of others join me there. Please, Senator Booker, please protect my Social Security.

I just thank God that my mom had the resources to take care of my dad, and I watched that degenerative disease take from his life 20 years and how much it cost—the thousands of dollars it cost my mom to take care of him.

I know my friend ANDY KIM, who is in the Senate right now, is facing health challenges with his father. I know so many people personally whose parents have Alzheimer's. I know so many Americans who are not powerful. They are not rich. I know so many Americans who live in fear every day that one little thing will happen to them that will destabilize their financial well-being. And now those millions of Americans, because a President and a man named Musk are striking fear into them, are whacking away the people that answer phones, are firing the people in an Agency that already was struggling with wait times, already was struggling with slow response times—these people who are hanging on by a thread in their lives or are facing the people they love the most who are struggling with the diseases that so many of us in this body have been affected by, they are now worried. They are writing me letters with words like "fear" and "terror." They are talking about staying up at night and not being able to sleep because they don't have a President who comforts them. They have a President who talks down to them, who lies about the services that they rely on.

What is this? It is not normal. It is not normal. This is America. How can the most powerful people in our land not comfort others, not tell them they have nothing to fear, but fear itself? Not tell them to have malice toward none but have charity toward all?

What kind of man is in our White House that makes fun of the disabled, who lies so much that the fact-checkers lose count, who minimizes the pain and the suffering? We have Cabinet Secretaries who say—the billionaires themselves who say: If my mom misses a Social Security check, ah. But if somebody else complains about it, they are probably a fraudster.

These people are not fraudsters. They are hurting. They are afraid. They are worried. For God's sake, this is America.

Every one of our Founders' documents is riddled with words that speak to our commitment to each other. Yeah, they were imperfect geniuses, but they were people that aspired to virtue. They read the greatest philosophers of their times. They said: What does it mean to be good to one another? What does it mean to create a society that is not run by despots and dictators who are so disconnected, who talk down, "let them eat cake"?

They dreamed of a different country than this, folks. They dreamed of a different country than this. They dreamed of a country that stood for not just "get all I can for me," the biggest tax cuts possible to the wealthiest people. They dreamed of a nation where any child born in any circumstance from any place could grow up and have their American dream.

And God, it gut-wrenches me when I hear people not as privileged as me—and I am not Musk and DOGE—but my mom had the resources and the family to support her as she watched my dad die of Parkinson's disease. But this person who is writing in, she herself has Parkinson's. She underlines and bolds the part of her letter. She says—and I will read it again because, Ms. Spooner, I want you—from Chippewa Falls, WI—to know you are seen, to know you are heard, to know that maybe the President will talk down and cut and malign your only paycheck, your only hope, but I won't. I won't.

I see you. I feel you. You can't lead the people if you can't love the people. And I am sorry our President is not showing that. He may be saying those words.

She writes, with Parkinson's—I still remember my dad telling me he had it. She writes about Parkinson's:

It is unrelenting. It affects my motor and nerve processes. Loss of benefits will have a direct and daily effect on me and my family as we navigate the medical needs we are going to be facing. I will need progressive and comprehensive care as I age. I will need medication every single day of my life.

I know this. I know you will.

I will need the security of a generous society to care for me.

A generous society to do the basic for families in this kind of struggle.

Millions of others join me there. Protect my Social Security, Senator Booker.

I tell you, I am going to fight for your Social Security. I am going to fight to protect the Agency. I am going

to fight against unnecessary cuts that hurt the service it gives. And today into tomorrow, I am going to stand as long as I can. As long as I can, I am going to stand and read stories like this because you are seen; you are heard. Your voices are more important than any of the 100 of us.

More of your stories should be told on this floor. People that are scared right now, terrified right now, people living in rural areas that see their local Social Security Agency on a list that Elon Musk made of places he is going to sell away to the private sector, and you are going to lose your Agencies. Well, I will fight.

I am sorry.

Margaret Hebring from Chippewa Falls, WI. Chippewa Falls, two letters, my staff is keeping me on my toes. This is another person from Chippewa Falls, WI.

My name is Margaret Hebring, and I live in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. I am 77 years old, and I am a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles band of the Lake Superior Ojibwe. My husband is a veteran and who is currently—

I am sorry, so sorry.

My husband is a veteran who currently has cancer, and he is receiving chemotherapy at the VA hospital, which we have to travel to, which is over 100 miles away. And without our Social Security, I am not sure what would happen to us.

We would, for sure, have to sell our home. I have savings that will last me one month. I have savings that will last me one month right now. We live paycheck to paycheck. So please, please protect our Social Security.

This is Judith Brown. We are moving away from the great State of Wisconsin. We are going to the great State of North Carolina, where my dad is from, up in Hendersonville—no, Asheville. But this person, Judith Brown, is from Charlotte, NC, one of my top five favorite non-New Jersey States.

I don't know if my friend ANDY KIM has his top five favorite non-New Jersey States. New Jersey is obviously the best. Don't look at the Senator from Connecticut, and I hate to tell him that Connecticut is not on my top five non-New Jersey States, even though I got educated—

Mr. MURPHY. You lived in Connecticut.

Mr. BOOKER. I am sorry about that. I am sorry about that. The Presiding Officer is such a good man. His State is not on my top five non-New Jersey States, but North Carolina is. And I am going to read a letter from Judith Brown.

My name is Judith Brown. I live in Charlotte, North Carolina. I was 17 when I started working and worked for another 20 years as an administrator until I had to be declared disabled. Without disability, I would not have been able to see my specialist, get eye care, or any of the other needs that I had. I was also the mother of two young sons who are on the autism spectrum. Without disability, I wouldn't have been able to take care of them and get the care they needed to be independent young men.

God bless them.

I hear that they want to close the field offices and change the customer service line.

As a person with mobility and vision impairments, this is outrageous. I need to be able to access it the best way I can on the times that I can access it. Please, Senator, fight to protect Social Security for a senior like me and for young people with disabilities like my son. Thank you.

No, thank you, Judith Brown. Thank you for writing a letter. Thank you for speaking up. Thank you for not being silent. Thank you for advocating, not just for your family but for the millions and millions of other Americans who lean heavily not just on their Social Security checks but on the incredible public servants that keep that Agency working and who wish to have a President that said: I am going to bring the best of business experience to my customer service. I am going to bring the best of caring and technology and innovation. I am going to call the best computer technologist scientists in the country. We are going to make this the best Social Security in the history of our country.

And you know what, my friends, the billionaires I had on stage with me when I was inaugurated, I am just going to ask them to pay a little bit more, .00001 percent more of their net worth to make sure Social Security is safe forever.

I am sorry. It is crazy. I am going back to Pennsylvania. I mean, it is almost like you can't make this up, honestly. I just know my country. I know our character. I know how good of a people we are. I know how much we love one another. I know our faith in red States and blue States and right and left.

I have sat next to people on planes who introduced themselves to me as Republicans from a red State, and by the end, we are laughing and talking and sharing stories. We are a good nation. Together, we can be so great and show them that.

But how can we have a President that in 71 days drives this much fear into our country? It is absurd, everybody. It is absurd. This is why I can't let this be normal anymore.

Michelle from Lancaster, PA:

My name is Michelle Gruver—

I love your last name, Michelle—

from Lancaster, PA, and I would definitely be impacted if something would happen to my Social Security—

Michelle also has Parkinson's—

and I am on disability, and the money that I have goes pretty much to most of my medications and foods that I need to eat to keep myself going and strong. That is how it would impact my family. I wouldn't be able to afford also my insulin for my diabetes.

Parkinson's and diabetes.

So it is a challenge every month as it is even with the amount that we have because of the cost of pharmaceuticals and things to keep us going.

Yes.

So that is why Social Security is really important to us as a family. It helps us get by every day. Thank you.

This is Patricia Heaney Porter from Johnstown, PA:

My name is Patricia Heaney Porter. I reside in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. My work is varied. I have been employed as a secretary in the private sector, as a statistician for a government agency, as a real estate agent, and most recently as a legal secretary. This is my story of how Social Security has affected my life. My mother passed away in 1956. My sisters and I—

God bless you—

were 8, 10, and 11.

My maternal grandparents stepped in, and they raised us with the help of Social Security survivor benefits, resulting in good education and other needs to be met. We had almost normal lives due to these benefits.

While raising two children, I worked as a real estate agent. My income was based on commissions rather than salary, so I made entire Social Security payments based on my income. We had a roof over our heads, healthy food on the table. One of my children had serious medical issues. And I paid for her bills out of pocket, never asking for a penny from any government agency. These expenses were paid for from my income, and I paid taxes every year.

I waited until I was 70 to collect my Social Security benefits as I realized the later you collect, the better the benefits. I have no pension, and I live almost entirely on Social Security benefits. I am always looking for part-time work, but few people want to hire me as I will be 80 in June.

God bless you, God bless you.

Based on the benefits I receive, I am able to pay my mortgage and all monthly expenses. I receive Medicare which helps pay the medical bills.

Should Social Security and Medicare be taken from me, I will likely lose my home. I could no longer afford medical costs, groceries. I have a medical condition which requires regular visits with a specialist who is 70 miles away. Without Social Security and Medicare, I would no longer be able to see him, and my condition would result in death sooner rather than later.

Thank you for all you are doing to see that the benefits received from Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will continue.

Senator MURPHY and I were talking. It is all interrelated, right? This is somebody on Social Security, but they have to drive for medical attention. We are in a hospital crisis in America. There are so many rural areas where rural residents of our country have to drive so far just to get to a hospital.

And cuts in Medicaid, we heard it from the letters I read in the last section, will endanger those hospitals' survival.

Charlotte, NC, again, Kevin Woodson. I get a lot of letters, my staff, from Wisconsin and Charlotte, NC. OK.

My name is Kevin Woodson. I am a 69-year-old retiree living in Charlotte, North Carolina. I worked 38 years for two Fortune 50 companies, and I thought that I would have a fully funded pension plan to live off of in my retirement. However, I never got to 25 years in, so only got partial pensions.

This is why I need Social Security. It covers the holes the pensions don't cover in terms of medical benefits. It allows me the freedom to enjoy my life, take care of activities that I need in order to keep myself healthy. Social Security is dependable, something I rely on—

Not a Ponzi scheme—

and I hope that we don't touch Social Security and we don't have any issues trying to

keep that money flowing. It is money I paid into.

Margaret Silva from Surprise, AZ. I love that name. Surprise, AZ.

Hello, my name is Margaret Silva. I live in Surprise, Arizona, with my husband. I started working at the age of 15 doing volunteer work as a candy striper at the hospital where my mother worked. I did not get paid. After that, I started working as a waitress earning .50 cents an hour. After graduating from high school, I took various jobs earning a little more, and then I started working at Mountain Bell, and I retired after 30 years from Qwest. So if they do Social Security cuts, I don't know what I am going to do.

I will be forced at the age of 74 to look for a job. So those are my hard-earned benefits, I worked for that. More than 30 years I worked for that. Thank you.

Wayne Behnke from Chippewa Falls, WI. I need to go to Chippewa Falls, WI. This is the third letter you guys are having me read, including people reaching out to me from Chippewa Falls. God bless you. I need to visit your community.

Hello, I am Wayne from Chippewa Falls. Soon to be 69 years old. I have been on Social Security for a couple years, my wife and I. I spent years in the service, Navy, and, again, like I said, my wife and I are going to have been on Social Security. Saying that, we would, if we lost our Social Security tomorrow, we would lose our house, our cars, and pretty much our livelihood because this is what we have worked for, and we don't need to lose it.

Why do you work for 55 years and pay into Social Security and then lose it? Recently, I tried to get back online and get on my Social Security account. I wasn't able to. Because of that, I went down to the Social Security office in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and they said they couldn't do anything for me that I had to set up an appointment. So I come home later, called, set up an appointment, and it is still three days out before I can get my appointment. And they don't know if they can help me. So at this point in time, I really need to know what is going on with Social Security, Senator Booker, because if we lose it, everybody else that is on it loses it. We are going to be in a really sorry state.

Those folks who answer phones and set appointments, they are sure important. When somebody is in crisis, they have to wait a few days, their check is missed, and it is real consequences for real people.

Hello, my name is Manuel. My wife and I live—

Surprise, surprise—

in Surprise, Arizona. We are both on Social Security. That is what we depend on to live our lives in our retirement years. We have to pay our bills, we have to buy food, we basically have to live off of that. So if they take our Social Security, what are we going to live off? Are you going to take care of us? You know, we are American citizens, and we deserve, and we have paid into it, and we have earned it. And it is not just something given to us. So leave our Social Security alone. Let us live our lives. Let us live our lives out the way they should be. And we are supposed to be in our golden years, so it is important to us. It is important to all Americans out there that are seniors. Let us live our lives. Thank you very much, Senator Booker.

Patricia Naughton from Pittsburgh, PA, I lift your voice.

My name is Patricia Naughton, and I am from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I have been paying into Social Security since I was 16 years old. I am currently 70 and have been collecting Social Security for the last 5 years. Without Social Security, I wouldn't be able to pay my mortgage, utilities, food, medicine, copays, and many other things. I would not be able to survive without Social Security. There is no reason that seniors should be held hostage over Social Security. This is our money, our money that we put into the Social Security system for many years. We deserve not to be threatened by the loss. Thank you.

Kathleen Woverding, from Hanover, PA.

Hello, my name is Kathleen Woverding, and I currently live in Hanover, Pennsylvania. I am originally from New Jersey and taught in the public school system for 29 years as a school librarian. When I retired, I decided to move to Hanover, Pennsylvania—

Kathleen, you are missed in New Jersey—

and at the age of 62, I started collecting Social Security because of COVID. I needed the extra stability that Social Security provides. I no longer have to work a full-time job because of Social Security, although I do work a part-time job and still pay into the system. Social Security provides me with stability, financial stability. It helps pay the bills, and I really don't have to worry about my finances because it is Social Security.

If Social Security is taken away, I will lose everything I have worked for the last 60 years. I feel that Social Security is a godsend. Protect it, Senator Booker. Thank you.

Cynthia Marino from Pennsylvania:

My name is Cynthia Marino. I am a retired registered nurse from Lancaster, PA. My husband—

I am sorry, Cynthia.

My husband died in 1990, and two of my children received survivor benefits for 8 years, during which time I was able to get my bachelor's degree in nursing and work part-time. All three of my children went on to get college degrees.

When I was 61 years old, I went on Social Security disability, having a hip replacement. I was switched to regular Social Security when I turned 65. I now depend mostly on Social Security for my husband and myself, with small pensions from both of our jobs supplementing Social Security.

I am now able to live independently in a handicap mobile home thanks to the money from Social Security in the past and present. It is much cheaper than Medicaid funds to keep me in a nursing home. Thank you, Senator Booker. Protect it.

Thank you, Cynthia, for your story.

These are just some. These are just some. I lift their voices. I lift their voices with mine.

I want to go to the Detroit Free Press, but before I read this article, I know my Senator from New Jersey is here. I am going to read this article, and if he is interested in our sixth hour, if he has a question, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor. But I am going to read this article, and then we will go.

This is from the Detroit Free Press. My mom was born in Detroit. I love the city. My family owes it a lot. It is where my grandfather went to find a job on the assembly lines in Detroit, building bombers during World War II.

It says:

Kathie Sherrill has been retired for about 10 years now and typically didn't think twice about whether she'd receive her Social Security payments on time.

For the first time ever, the 74-year-old Troy retiree went online in March on the very day that \$2,800 was to hit her bank account through direct deposit. She suddenly felt compelled to make absolutely certain that her Social Security money was there when it was supposed to be.

Sherrill and other retirees are on edge. Big. Time. Call it Social Security insecurity.

"I have never really worried about it as much as I have this year," Sherrill said. The money, thankfully, was sitting in her account in March and she knew her checks and payments for her ongoing bills would not start bouncing.

"I think anybody, future or current people on Social Security, are definitely targeted," she said. "It's a worry that I'm sure everybody is having right now."

I know it because I heard from my mom and her whole senior community. Seniors are uncertain of what is next for Social Security.

Since early February, AARP has seen nearly double the calls to its customer care line at 888-687-2277 as more people began being troubled about Social Security, and it has shown no signs of abating, according to an AARP spokesperson.

Since Feb. 1, AARP said it has been receiving more than 2,000 calls into its call center per week on concerns relating to Social Security.

"Social Security has never missed a payment and AARP and our tens of millions of members are not going to stand by and let that happen now," said John Hishta, AARP senior vice president of campaigns, in a statement last week.

While those words sound reassuring, it's frankly not comforting to realize that seniors need to hear that their monthly Social Security payments will arrive as usual. I don't imagine anyone had this one on their bingo cards for March 2025.

This kind of worry and stress.

On social media, I spotted one comment that said: "Folks, the federal workers began advising last month that all Americans remove all funds from the account where they normally receive any federal payments (Social Security, federal tax refunds and the like). Keep the account but only use it as a place for feds to transfer money. Immediately move all transferred cash to a separate account."

The concern, according to the post: "DOGE can declare you dead and force your bank to send back any funds paid to you."

Whoa, a lot of retirement angst there and, yes, some wild notions and really bad advice. Moving Social Security money around to hide it in another account, different from where it's directly deposited, actually could put more of your money at risk when it comes to some debt collection.

Anyone who has tracked retirement policy, as I have, knows that the potential unraveling of the Social Security system has been discussed for decades. Many retirees just never imagined a convoluted scenario where someone would think Social Security, possibly, could implode in a few days.

The health of Social Security, which marks its 90th anniversary this year, isn't all that makes many retirees and those about to retire nervous. Their anxiety can go into overdrive watching the stock market slide on Trump tariff news—and seeing all the political ping-pong with Social Security money that belongs in their pockets.

The Trump administration has maintained that it wants to cut costs and fraud when it comes to the Social Security program, not benefits. But people remain skeptical, and some commentary isn't helping.

Acting Social Security Commissioner Leland Dudek in interviews last week, including one with Bloomberg News last Thursday, actually threatened to temporarily shut down Social Security after a federal judge temporarily stopped members of Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from digging through personal data at the Social Security Administration.

The DOGE operatives, according to the court, will first need to receive proper training on handling sensitive information, which some might say is the least they could do.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, or AFSCME, Alliance for Retired Americans, and the American Federation of Teachers filed a motion for emergency relief on March 7 to halt DOGE's "unprecedented, unlawful seizure" of sensitive data regarding millions of Americans.

No surprise, Dudek soon found it politically prudent to back off from his threat.

"I am not shutting down the agency," Dudek said in a statement, indicating he had received clarifying guidance from the court about the temporary restraining order.

President Trump supports keeping Social Security offices open and getting the right check to the right person at the right time," [Dudek said].

Financial tech CEO Frank Bisignano, who was nominated by President Donald Trump to lead the Social Security Administration, ended up being grilled by Democrats about the bedlam during confirmation hearings before the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday.

The angst isn't about to go away, particularly if people continue to face even longer waits on the phones or see Social Security offices closing in their communities, thanks to some key changes being made now [by Trump's administration].

Customer service is on the chopping block, as the Social Security Administration reduces the number of employees, restricts what services can be handled by phone and shuts some local offices where people could talk to someone face-to-face.

On Wednesday, the Social Security Administration announced that it would initiate a two-week delay for implementing a highly criticized move to end phone services and require in-person visits for some services.

"In-person identity proofing for people unable to use their personal 'my Social Security' account for certain services will be effective April 14," according to the announcement.

But individuals applying for Medicare, disability and Supplemental Security Income who cannot use a personal "my Social Security" account can complete their claim entirely over the telephone without the need to come into an office, according to the March 26 announcement. That's good news for many.

Even so, merely delaying the change doesn't help others and, frankly, customer service could still suffer longer term.

And it will get very ugly if current Social Security recipients miss out on even one dime of their benefits.

At one point last week, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick suggested that his 94-year-old mother-in-law wouldn't complain about missing a Social Security check for a month or so. Only fraudsters would call, he said during an "All-In" podcast.

My thought: Have you ever watched an exchange where someone on Social Security is being denied a coupon or a senior discount at

a store or restaurant? It is not pretty. Worse yet, has Lutnick ever talked with a friend or relative in his or her 70s or 80s who depends on Social Security to cover basic bills?

Social Security provides retirement, survivor and disability payments to 73 million people each month. That number includes about 56 million people who are age 65 or older.

Some people—and even Sherrill includes herself in that group—are better off than others. They won't miss paying an electric bill or the rent because they can turn to retirement savings or money from a traditional pension. Even so, Social Security remains an integral source of income each month for all retirees and others who receive benefits.

"I'm concerned about my financial future," Sherrill told me.

Social Security now represents about half of her monthly income.

She never imagined that any Social Security fix would involve cutting benefits for existing retirees. . . . Some GOP proposals have suggested increasing the age for full retirement benefits from 67 to 69 over an eight-year period beginning in 2026.

But she now fears that it's possible her benefits could get cut at some point down the road.

Overall, Sherrill has had fun in retirement. She has nine grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren and wants to spend more time with them, not less.

Sherrill and her friends who are retired are cutting back on eating out and entertainment, just in case something happens to Social Security. Higher prices for many things put pressure on fixed incomes, too.

She wants to take less money out of her retirement savings now, so she has more money sitting on the sidelines in case her Social Security benefits are cut in the future.

Even so, she's staring at an unexpected \$600 new monthly car payment ahead because she needs to replace a car that was in an accident a few weeks ago.

If her Social Security payments are cut or stopped. . . . "I may be selling it."

The wild swings for the stock market—and 401(k) plans—only created more jitters.

The economy seems uncertain. Consumer confidence is in worse of a place. Leaders are threatening Social Security services. Offices are being cut. People are being laid off. So people are worrying.

Taking a rough guess, she estimates that she has lost about \$30,000 on her retirement investments as the stock market tumbled in early 2025.

Over the years, she said, cuts to Social Security were always part of the political realm. But she felt that Congress provided a stopgap to any drastic moves. And she doesn't believe that's true anymore.

"I'm hoping that Congress wakes up, looks in the mirror and decides they don't like what they see," she told me.

One big problem with fueling an atmosphere of chaos is that many people do start worrying about everything, including the possibility that Social Security isn't a system that they can depend on anymore.

Sherrill said she just took a call from her college roommate who mentioned that she was going to look at her bank account online to see whether her monthly Social Security payment was stopped or had arrived as usual.

"I said, 'You're OK. I got [mine] this month.'"

So many people are afraid right now.

Mr. KIM. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. KIM. Thank you, Senator BOOKER, and thank you for coming to the floor tonight and speaking up. I have a few questions for you. So why don't you catch your breath.

I wanted to start by saying how proud I am of you to represent our great State of New Jersey, alongside each other. And it is not just me. I want to tell you—because I know you have been here in this Chamber non-stop for hours—but I want to tell you that people are paying attention, and they join me in thanking you in this moment. In fact, I saw a few posts I thought I would share.

Stacy from Bayonne said on Facebook:

I couldn't be prouder to be a life-long New Jerseyan than I am tonight. Keep it up. Get in that good trouble. Lead the way and hopefully others will follow.

Janie in Princeton said:

Thank you. Proud that you are my Senator and that you are bringing "Big Jersey energy" to DC tonight.

Vicki in Ewing said:

We are sending our strength to you. Medicare and Medicaid should not be touched.

And someone on Reddit even said:

I hope he wore the most comfortable and supportive shoes he could find.

In your opening, you said something that resonated with me. You said:

Our constituents are asking us to acknowledge that this is not normal, that this is a crisis.

I can't tell you how important it is to internalize it. That is why we are here at this late hour in the U.S. Senate. That is why you are leading here to make the case to the American people that this is a crisis. That resonated with me because I hear this over and over again. I hear it from people all over our home State, whether at townhalls or other rooms that are packed with people saying this moment is not normal; this moment constitutes a crisis. I am glad you are speaking on the floor and said that because what you said isn't just CORY BOOKER saying that; it is that millions of New Jerseyans we represent are saying it. And you are lifting up their voice. It is not just you are saying that; it is that millions of Americans who see something fundamentally wrong, and they are angry about it.

I have some questions for my colleague. But I want to add some context for this because I want to dig in a bit on why people are so angry at this moment and why what with we are seeing from Donald Trump and Elon Musk isn't in response to that anger; it is the cause of it.

A common refrain in the townhalls that I held are that people feel like nothing is working for them. There is a promise, a uniquely American promise that is simply going unfulfilled for too many. That promise is simple: Your government will work for you; your economy will allow you to advance if

you work hard and give your kids a better future; and your country will keep you safe by ensuring the world is stable and secure.

Senator, you and I are here because we know that this promise is going unfulfilled. To say that the American promise is going unfulfilled would be a tragedy in its own right. It would be something that we as a Congress should put our entire focus into restoring. But the sad fact is that this isn't just about a promise unfulfilled; it is about a promise that has been hijacked. It is about a promise that has been distorted to work for those who have been paid to play to be denied for everyone else.

Let's start with the promise that your government will work for you. This is the basis of our democratic Republic. We are public servants in that we serve the people. It is the people's priorities that we put first. It is their lives that we work to make better every day. It is their futures that we are endeavoring to brighten.

But when the people look at Donald Trump and his administration, they don't see that. They see Elon Musk who donated nearly \$300 million to buy his way into a seat in power. The world's richest man has been handed the keys to our government. And the same person who has been handed nearly \$40 billion in your taxpayer dollars to prop up his corporations is now working to fire veterans from their jobs, make the Social Security Administration less responsive to seniors, and make it harder for your government to work for you. That is what we have seen in the collection of billionaires that buy their way to fulfill their own American promise—a government that works for them and only them; a government that keeps them rich and at a cost to your Medicaid, to your Social Security, to the food you put on the table; government where they pay and they benefit and if you can't, you are left behind.

That is not the government our parents were promised. That is not the government we were promised. That is not the government we want to pass down to our kids.

As Senator BOOKER mentioned, our Nation is in crisis. Bedrock commitments are being broken. That starts with the first American promise. We can rebuild and restore that promise by actually working to make our government work for the people. Where we see corruption, we must call it out and combat it. And the corrupting power of money in our politics is one example. And the extreme wealth of billionaires like Elon Musk is drowning out working Americans, and that must be addressed.

And as we approach the 250th anniversary of the independence of our country, we have an opportunity to remind people that the promise of America is something bigger than ourselves. And that public service, not private enrichment for those at the very top but

public service is core to what makes this country special.

So let's talk about that second American promise. This is the promise of the American dream, that Rockwellian notion of the house and the white picket fence and the kids in the yard only works if you can pay for that house. It only works if you can afford childcare and healthcare for those kids. It only works if you can work hard and deliver something bigger and better than you are handed. And right now, that is not happening.

While we are fighting to bring change to our economy to make life more affordable and the middle class more accessible, what we are seeing from Donald Trump and Elon Musk is another promise hijacked for those at the very top.

Senator BOOKER, I want to just take a step back as I get into these questions here because you are talking about Social Security, talking about Medicaid, talking about so many of these other issues here. But in that broader context, what we have situated here is the recognition that we live in the time of the greatest inequality in our Nation's history.

So it isn't just about these programs and how we rely on them, it is that we are seeing the wealth gap widening, and it is happening faster and faster.

In many ways, I consider this to be the great fragility of America right now. We are the greatest, richest, most powerful country in the world but not for everybody. And what we see right now, it is not just about Social Security; it is not just about the checks, but as you mentioned, Social Security offices are closing, worry about customer service, people call on the phone lines. And it feels like efforts are on the way to try to sabotage our Social Security, our Medicare, our Medicaid, and then have people say: Hey, look, it is not working, and that is why we need to get rid of these things.

And that sabotage is something people see right before their very eyes. I mean, you heard the Commerce Secretary talk about how seniors won't mind if there are late payments. He said those that complain are fraudsters, as you mentioned. That is directly trying to undermine people who are working hard over the course of their lives.

I have to say, it is a great irony in many ways, this idea that the richest man in the world is criticizing the hard-earned savings of seniors that are just getting a little bit every single month for them to just try to get by, and then he calls it a Ponzi scheme.

My father, as you mentioned, is one of those that depends on Social Security for his entire livelihood right now. I heard another person at a townhall describe the feeling that she has right now, and I think you can connect with it. She says it feels hard to breathe right now because there is so much anxiety in the American people. I am glad you are shining a light on this be-

cause people are scared and they are worried and they want to know what comes next.

My question to you here is something that was actually shared by a constituent of both of ours talking about all the concerns of Social Security of this time.

But I thought it was very poignant in pointing out that what we also need to put forward to the American people right now is a vision going forward of how to not just restore and protect this promise but how we take it to the next step. If we live in a time of the greatest amount of inequality, not just to think about how we hold on to a receding tide but how to try to put forward some vision that can try to inspire the same way that Social Security did and put forward generational change—I wanted to ask you that sense.

Do you believe in that sense that right now, more than ever, as people are faced with this anxiety that is hard to breathe, that, yes, we will stand here on the floor of the Senate and do everything we humanly can to be able to protect what they have. But do you agree that we also have to put forward that positive vision of where do we take Social Security, where do we take Medicaid, Medicare; where do we take our economy to better work for everybody so we are not just trying to figure out how to better divide and hold on to the pennies that the billionaires are willing to share with the rest of us while they don't give us anything else to be able to move forward on.

And how do we come up with a vision that tries to shrink that inequality and live in a society that is willing to share that wealth and recognize there is more than enough to go around? And that is not zero-sum and that we can be stronger together in that way.

I would love to hear how you can paint that vision for the American people.

Mr. BOOKER. I will answer your question. But knowing that my mom is watching right now, before I answer the question, I want to tell the folks who may not know about the relationship with my other Senator from New Jersey—it is probably one of the more interesting relationships in here.

I always tell New Jerseyans, I voted for ANDY KIM before anybody else did because I was on an interview committee for the Rhodes Scholarship in New Jersey. I was a former Rhodes, and I really wanted the experience of what it was like to be on the other side because my experience was quite interesting.

These incredible folks came in, young people from New Jersey who were amazing, applying for this extremely competitive scholarship. ANDY KIM was one among that number, and he blew the committee away. So way back—I am going to retain the floor but ask you a question. What year was that?

Mr. KIM. That would have been 2004. Twenty-one years.

Mr. BOOKER. How many years?

Mr. KIM. Twenty-one.

Mr. BOOKER. Twenty-one years ago. In 2002, I lost a run for mayor and in 2006, I ran again. I was in between trying to do my work in Newark.

ANDY blew me away. I knew then that he was this extraordinary man of character and brilliance, this great mix of heart and head, this great mix of honor, and a fierce ambition to make a contribution to the world. And if you follow ANDY's career, he has been a public servant in some of the highest levels of the administration.

But then he ran for Congress, and I remember that race. You electrified, not just the district you represented but really the whole State of New Jersey. And then he came here.

But the moment that I remember most was during the January 6 attack. I was here on the Senate floor in this very seat. I will never forget how back here, MARK KELLY, an unbelievable Senator—he and I were two of the last people off the floor, along with one of our Republican colleagues, trying to make sure if anybody broke through we would be there. I can't believe as a Senator I was thinking how to fight my way off the Senate floor.

But I remember we got to an undisclosed location. A lot of Senators were in safe spots, a lot of House Members were in safe spots debating about what to do. I am so happy we came back late and continued the business of government, transfer of power.

While all these Senators were dealing with big issues, whatever, ANDY KIM took a broom, plastic bags, and began cleaning up under the Capitol dome—remarkable humility shown in a humble gesture about his love of country.

Now, here we stand on the Senate floor at the earliest hours of the morning, closing in on 2 a.m. You asked me this question I didn't expect which is: Hey, CORY, this now seems to be a time where Democrats are finding themselves about what they are against; shouldn't we be talking about a vision of what we are for? I am very upset watching what is happening to Social Security, watching what is happening to insinuate fear amongst seniors who should be retiring with security and peace, cuts undermining thousands of people being laid off—all of that is worthy of us standing here and the things we are reading.

But what I think Senator KIM is really pointing to is the fact that there are bold visions for whom we are going to be as a country. He is one of these big believers that we can be a nation that boasts about we are a country where somebody doesn't retire and lives on such a meager check that they are technically at the poverty line. "Senator BOOKER, we have more wealth than nations all around the globe—stratospheric wealth in this country, GDP growth, and can't we design a system that doesn't have seniors stressed out and living—those that live off of their paychecks—living there?"

The other thing I know you know about—and I recently did a talk with a Republican friend of mine, Senator YOUNG—we worked on a bill together because we both recognize we are in a grip with seniors—that generation, baby boomers, a generation ahead of me—I almost said us, but you are technically a millennial.

Mr. KIM. That is right.

Mr. BOOKER. I am an Xer. But the generation ahead of me is so big that we are seeing this massive group of Americans, soon to be retiring, and lots of people recognize it, calling it the “great retirement crisis,” not because Social Security checks won’t be there. You were asking me: CORY, what is the great vision for them to be there? But because just the reality that the Social Security checks themselves are so meager, and many other people don’t have jobs where they have 401(k)s and the like. Senator YOUNG—again, this is not a partisan speech.

Later, I will be quoting from the Cato Institute, the Wall Street Journal, where there are lots of conservatives who point to this not being a normal time in America; this being a crisis moment in America, not just people on my side of the aisle but Republican Governors, Republican thought leaders—a lot of folks are saying there is a real crisis in our country being caused by the current President, who, in 71 days, most people can’t say yes; most people say no to the question. Are you better off than you were 71 days ago?

So I want to answer your question by saying this: Everyone should retire with a secure Social Security. I believe there are ways to secure the programs by asking the wealthiest people who pay the smallest percentage of their income into Social Security to pay a little bit more in Social Security taxes on their income, which is minuscule. As you said, there is a gravity of wealth that is being created in this country, which is, again, something I am not against in terms of just being successful. But this idea that we have a system that creates a fair retirement is one thing we can do.

I think, also, one of these things we should be talking about right now is how do we make the Social Security system not frustrating for people who complained before Donald Trump laid off tens of thousands of people with Musk, who complained about wait times, and other things. There are ways we can improve Social Security services as well.

So I think we can do things to secure Social Security in the long term with a simple fix, not by raising the retirement age for people who are struggling but by doing things by simply saying: Do you know what? Social Security taxes are already regressive because they cap out at a certain amount. Maybe skip some of the people in the middle, under \$400,000 or \$500,000 a year, and make people who are the wealthiest in the country pay a little bit more.

That would be my vision. A very small amount would create a secure system. I think we can also do a lot to improve the Social Security services.

Then what I did with Senator YOUNG—this is what is special about this place when it happens. It is for people to reimagine what economic security could be about. I am now very quietly—I think I have told you about this. I have this great idea that I have been talking about for years called baby bonds, or that every child born in America—and this is not a new idea. We actually scraped it from people years and years ago on both sides of the aisle in here, who had this idea that why not in a capitalist society have every child be born with a savings account—excuse me—a growth account. The government seeds it with some money, and through their entire lives, people can contribute into that tax-free, and it can grow, so that by the time—not by retirement—but by the time they are 20, 25, 30, they have thousands, if not tens of thousands, of dollars to invest in things that create wealth, because, right now, lots of people are working paycheck to paycheck and don’t have stock accounts or the kinds of things that could actually produce a lot more wealth.

I am just throwing that out as one idea, ANDY. I am going to pause because I know you have another question, and I am going to yield to a question while retaining the floor. But I just want to say there are so many bipartisan ideas with which to deal with wealth inequality. I mean, the child tax credit was, unfortunately, not made permanent. It cut child poverty in America in half. It worked for an entire year. I remember some of my colleagues, from Marco Rubio to Mitt Romney, talking about: Hey, we should be expanding the child tax credit. We should be having a bolder vision for America—for retirement security, for wealth creation, for economic security.

But we are not talking about those bold ideas.

We have a President who has come in, and one of the first things he has done in 71 days is insinuate fear and insecurity about Social Security by threatening it, by creating and telling lies about it, and by having somebody like Elon Musk calling it a Ponzi scheme. That is why we get fear. Then they take a hatchet to the actual Agency that undermines its ability to deliver service in a good way.

Mr. KIM. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield to a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. KIM. What you raised is absolutely right, and it is front and center in everyone’s mind.

You know, when my parents immigrated here 50 years ago, they didn’t know anybody in the entire Western Hemisphere of planet Earth. But Americans called them. It inspired them.

I asked them once: What was it that drew you here?

And they said that they felt that, here in America, they could guarantee

that the family that they raised, that their kids—me and my sister—would have a better life and more opportunities than they did, and that was the sense of that generational progress that is made.

But now, you know, I am standing here with a 7-year-old and a 9-year-old—I am hoping fast asleep right now—and I don’t know if I can make that same promise to them right now, that I can guarantee them that they will have a better life and more opportunities.

So, you know, there is that growing cynicism and pessimism about that American promise I talked to you about, and I just feel like there is an unraveling happening here, where we see this sense of concern, and it is being weaponized by some who create that sense of zero sum to push us away from this idea that we are a part of something bigger than all of us and that we can all lift each other up in that great American project.

It is sad because, as we were getting to that 250th anniversary, you know, it should be a time when we rededicate ourselves to the American project—right?—like recommit ourselves to what the next 250 years will be. But we are entering it now with a sense of pessimism on that front. So, you know, I guess my question to you here is, how do we break out of that tailspin on that front?

Mr. BOOKER. So, ANDY, you have gotten me really excited—

Mr. KIM. Yes.

Mr. BOOKER.—because I love that you are a millennial. I am X generation. I love the baby boomers, but they are quickly leaving Congress. This is the last baby boomer President you will ever have. I am confident of that. And new generations are coming forward to lead in America.

It is time that we dream America anew. It really is. It is time that we revive and redeem the dream. I just am one of these people who thinks, like: OK, guys, we have some of the brightest minds on the planet Earth. Some of our Founding Fathers said we need a little revolution every once in a while, like we need new thoughts and new ideas and new visions that energize people, that take a lot of the old divisions in our country and erase them and remind people we have common cause and common purpose. I want to get people excited again about the American dream. I want to renew the dream, to redeem the dream. We can do that. I am so excited about it.

And on financial security, it is absurd that we don’t have the greatest plan to create wealth, not for the favored few simply—again, the top quartile in America has crushed it over the last 25 years. Under Obama alone, the stock market doubled. But most Americans don’t own stocks. So people who are sitting on passive wealth were able to grow and grow and grow and grow, while working Americans saw their prices going up, housing becoming

unaffordable, and the idea of the American dream under assault.

It ticks me off that other countries are trying to out-America us. They are trying to take our secret sauce that we seem to be turning our back on: affordable higher education, apprenticeship programs. I mean, with some of our European competitors, a job just appears before you, and you can go right into an apprenticeship program where you can earn and learn and end up in a career that gives you not just success but that you thrive in.

There is no idea that we can't conceive of as a country. This is an idea and a time that I just think that we need to start being bold again in our visions for collective prosperity, for everyone to thrive—not just the favorite few but the many. I am telling you that those ideas are out there, whether it is baby bonds or the child tax credit or investing in science and research. There are so many things.

But you are—can I say this to you affectionately? You are a nerd as am I. We are two guys who love to read, who love American history. We are two guys in this body—go back a century. They never imagined that we would be here. OK?

One of my favorite speeches of all time was when Daniel Webster got on Bunker Hill, and he delivered a speech—I am going to read the introduction to it—to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Revolutionary War battle at Bunker Hill, in which the outnumbered colonists inflicted such heavy losses on the mighty British forces attempting to invade. I love one of the quotes. I can't remember it exactly, but the general—the person who was leading the British attack—wrote in their diary.

He wrote back to the King: We won the battle, but a few more victories like this and we are going to lose the continent.

That is how great these people were, and this is what I want you to know: It is a new generation, right?

Mr. KIM. Yes.

Mr. BOOKER. Those leaders are no longer around. I read this, and I get excited by the possibility for our generation and for the new leaders who are emerging in America. They have to. It is their obligation to not let the dream die and to redeem the dream.

So here it is. I am just dying to read this to you. Here it is, ANDY. I don't want to read too much of it to you.

OK. Here we go:

If in our case the representative system is ultimately to fail, this idea of a democratic government, popular governments must be pronounced impossible.

He is saying:

We have an obligation to make a more perfect Union. No combination of circumstances more favorable to this experiment can ever be expected. The last hopes of mankind, therefore, rest with us. Can we make this democratic experiment work?

And it should be proclaimed that our example had become an argument for the experiment. The principle of free government

adheres to this American soil. It is bedded in the soil. It is as movable as this Nation's mountains. And let the sacred obligations—

This is the part, Senator KIM.

And let the sacred obligations which have devolved on this generation, and on us, sink deep into our hearts [the sacred obligations]. Those are daily dropping from among us who established our liberty and our government. The generation that established this Nation are now dying. The great trust now descends to our hands. Let us apply ourselves to which is presented to us as an appropriate object. We can win no laurels in our generation in a war for independence. Earlier and worthier hands gathered [all of those laurels]. Nor are there places for us by the sight of Solon and Alfred and other founders of our state. Our fathers have filled them. But there remains to us a great duty of defense and preservation, and there is open to us also that noble pursuit to which the spirit of the times strongly invites us. Our proper business is improvement. Let ours be the age of improvement. In a day of peace, let us advance the arts of peace and the works of peace. Let us develop the resources of our lands, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote all its greatness, and see whether we also, in our day and generation, may not perform something worthy to be remembered. Let us cultivate a true spirit of union and harmony. In pursuing the great objects which our condition points out to us, let us act under a settled conviction, and an habitual feeling, that these twenty-four states are one country. Let our conceptions be enlarged to the circle of our duties. Let us extend our ideas over the whole of the vast field in which we are called to act. Let our object be our country, our whole country. . . . And, by the blessings of God, may that country itself become a vast and splendid monument, not of oppression and terror but of wisdom, peace, and liberty upon which the world may gaze with admiration for ever!

That is a bold vision—this bold vision that doesn't give up on America, that doesn't surrender to cynicism about America. That is who you are, ANDY KIM, and that is what gets me excited.

Right now, we are fighting against what I think are tyrannical forces. I am sorry. When a leader stands up not with humility like in George Washington's Farewell Address or like some of the great Founders in their inaugural addresses, but who stands up and says, "Only I can solve these problems," but who doesn't use his speeches to heal and to comfort but to talk about the enemies he is going to pursue—and those enemies are not the adversaries who seek to destroy us but are the enemies who are other Americans—and to create an environment where our seniors, who should be retiring in security, are fearful that their Social Security or their Medicaid or their Medicare is going to be under threat, that is insidious to me.

This is an un-normal time. This is why I am standing here. But you, my friend, my partner in the Senate—God, this partnership. I am so excited about the future. I am so excited about the promise. Let us fend off all attempts to

cut Social Security and Social Security services. Let us fend off all attempts to cut Medicaid and Medicaid care and CHIP and all the other things that we rely on.

But let us also not forget that our obligation is not to defend what it is but to have a vision for what can become. We now, when so many people are giving up on the American dream, on the idea of America, on which you said so wonderfully that my children will do better than me—that basic bedrock that our children, generation after generation, will do better and better and better—it is time to redeem the dream and dream America anew with bold visions. It is not how we will just help people survive in retirement, but they are visions of how we can all thrive in this great Nation that has enough resource and enough abundance—abundance—to provide for everyone's hopes and dreams.

(Mr. MCCORMICK assumed the Chair.)

Mr. KIM. Thank you so much. Keep up your energy.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you. You have given me energy. I am sourcing my energy from you.

I don't want to just cast aspersions on—and we are saying things that I just want to back up in fact. All of those letters—all of those letters from seniors—I see my dear friend from Pennsylvania is now the Presiding Officer. He missed all of the letters I read from Pennsylvania. In all of those letters, people were using the words "Ponzi scheme." Where did that come from? I just want to read from "The Joe Rogan Experience." I actually liked it. I enjoy listening to Joe Rogan.

Elon:

Social Security is the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time.

Now, that is a big statement. It is the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time, Elon says.

And Joe Rogan says:

Why? Explain that.

Elon says:

Oh. So, well, people pay into Social Security, um . . . and—the money goes out of Social Security immediately. But the obligation for Social Security is . . . uh . . . your entire retirement career. So you're . . . you're paying . . . uh . . . with your, the kind of people . . . you're paying . . .

And I am reading this verbatim.

You're paying . . . uh . . . with your, the kind of people . . . you're paying . . . like—like—if you look at the future obligations of Social Security, it far exceeds, uh, the—the tax revenue—uh . . . far.

If you've looked at the debt, the debt clock.

Rogan says:

Yes.

OK. There's, there's, there's—

Three "there's." I am reading it verbatim—

our present-day debt, but then there's our future obligation. So when you look at the future obligation of Social Security, um, uh, the actual, uh, national debt is, like, double

what—what people think it is because of the future obligations.

Rogan:

Uh.

Elon:

So, uh, basically, people are living way longer than expected.

That was the evidence of a Ponzi scheme.

Now, let's correct something. The reason why we have a massive debt in America—lots of people should take ownership over it. But the biggest debt creator in the last, say, 25, 30 years, is the President of the United States, the current one, in his first term, by blowing massive holes in our deficits to give tax cuts that went way disproportionately to the wealthiest Americans and corporations. And he wants to renew those tax cuts that independent budget folks are saying could add trillions of dollars to our national deficit.

So if he is talking about the debt clock or whatever he is talking about, he is part of an administration—even though he is not elected and not approved by Congress and whatever, he and his President—the richest man in the world and the most powerful man in the world—together they are driving an agenda that is going to drive this deficit much bigger. And they are going to try to pay for some of it—not all of it because it is trillions of dollars of projected debt. They are going to try to pay for some of it by cutting NIH grants, by cutting Medicaid, by cutting staff at Social Security.

So, no, Social Security is not a Ponzi scheme. People paid into it. And as ANDY KIM and I just talked, there are ways to preserve it, strengthen it, and make it better.

It is a program that pays benefits after a lifetime of work. It has never missed a payment. It has never run out of money. It is an insurance program. But don't take my word. Here is Current Affairs magazine editor Nathan Robinson writing on March 7: "Why Social Security Is Not a Ponzi Scheme."

That is a great title.

Old age insurance is not a scam, and it's not destined to collapse. Proponents of privatizing or eliminating Social Security are constantly telling lies about it.

Here is the article:

Elon Musk has called Social Security a "Ponzi scheme," comparing it to a scam in which a con man must keep finding new suckers in order to disguise the financial unsustainability of his enterprise. [The] term has also been used by libertarian commentators at Reason and the Hoover Institute, who try to convince people that the program is fundamentally broken and unsustainable. Because both Social Security and Ponzi schemes take money in from new contributors which they pay to old ones, it is easy to craft a superficial resemblance between [the two]. But Social Security is not a Ponzi scheme, and it's important to understand why, because the comparison is used to generate the illusion of a Social Security "crisis" that can be used to justify major benefit cuts or even the elimination of the program altogether. [Under the Ponzi

scheme,] the differences between old age insurance and Ponzi schemes, we can train ourselves mentally to resist the propaganda that is used to try to convince the public to support undermining one of our most important social welfare programs.

Let's think about a few different cases in which money is pooled and paid out. First, let us imagine a company has a pension scheme. (I realize this may be difficult to imagine these days, but stick with me for a minute.) Workers pay 5 percent of their income. The employer pays in an amount equivalent to 15 percent of the worker's income. When the worker retires, they get a fixed benefit every year for the rest of their life, equivalent to some percentage of what their salary was. [Let's call that] Scenario A.

Now let us imagine a different scenario: Five (uncommonly astute) middle schoolers create a rudimentary insurance scheme to guard against being punished by their parents. The children all go to the mall every week to play arcade games together. They each get an allowance of \$10 per week, which they spend at the arcade. What they decide to do is spend \$9 each week instead and put \$1 per week into a fund. If one of them has their allowance taken away by their parents, the fund will pay their arcade money for the week. That way, nobody in the friend group is ever deprived of the ability to go to the arcade. We are going to call [that] Scenario B.

Finally, let us imagine a scenario in which a fraudster tricks a group of old people into giving him their money. He says that if they invest their retirement money with him, he can guarantee them a 20 percent per year return, risk-free. They invest. He provides them with statements showing that their money is indeed growing at 20 percent [a] year. When they ask [him] to pull a portion of their money out so they can spend it, he disburses it. But what he [is actually] doing is spending all of their money and providing fake statements. He is able to keep paying withdrawals because he is constantly recruiting new suckers, just enough to cover what people are withdrawing. Eventually, people get suspicious, too many try to withdraw their money at once, and he flees the country. This is a Ponzi scheme, named after the Italian con [man] Charles Ponzi, who fleeced people in this way. We will call the Ponzi scheme scenario C.

Notice that there are similarities and differences between [the] three scenarios. A similarity is that there is a fund that some people are paying into while others are being paid. Another similarity is that all three are potentially unstable. . . . In Scenario A (company pension), employees start living a very long time in [their] retirement, the amount of money in the pension fund might not be able to cover the promised benefits, necessitating an adjustment of the contributions from the next generation of workers. . . . Or if, in Scenario B (middle school arcade . . . insurance), one of the kids might be so unruly that his parents are suspending his allowance every other week, requiring an adjustment of the rules for payouts or contributions . . . to keep the fund sustainable. Scenario C [the] (Ponzi scheme) is the most unstable of all, because it depends on an elaborate fraud, on fake accounting that disguises the fact [that] nobody has the amount of money that they are being told they have. It . . . only last[s] until people try to actually use the money. . . . But scenarios A and B could also collapse if they are not managed well.

We can see that despite the commonalities . . . there are fundamental differences between scenarios A . . . B and scenario C. The first two are legitimate ways for people to pool and distribute money, and they can

work just fine . . . accomplishing their intended purpose. The third is a fraud in which people's money is being stolen. The difference is more important than the similarities.

I have laboriously laid out these examples in . . . hopes that we can better understand why Social Security can be made to look like a "Ponzi scheme" but [it] isn't . . . one at all. "Social Security is the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time," said Musk. "People pay into Social Security, and the money goes out of Social Security immediately. But the obligation for Social Security is your entire retirement career." Now, it's true that in an insurance system, the incoming payments from new people might be used to fund outgoing payments to people who were already part of the [Ponzi scheme.] But that's not what makes a Ponzi scheme a Ponzi scheme. Musk, not for the first time, doesn't know what he's talking about.

One of the reasons Social Security can be made to seem like a Ponzi scheme is [because] people may misunderstand how it works. People might think that Social Security saves their money over time, and then when they retire it pays "their" money back. That is not how it works. It's not like a savings account. The money I pay in is not saved up for me, it's paid out to today's beneficiaries. When I retire, my benefits will be paid by the money coming in from the next generation of workers. Discovering this fact can make people think [that] Social Security is [a Ponzi scheme, but it is not.]

. . . . A Ponzi scheme is a fraud in which the returns are fake. There is nothing fake about Social Security. As long as enough money is in the pool to pay out the beneficiaries, the operation is sustainable, and perfectly honest. The only reason it matters that retirees do not pay for their own benefits, but depend on the payments of the next generation of workers, is that if there isn't a next generation of workers, we . . . have [got] a problem. But fortunately, there is every reason to believe that human beings will continue to exist, work, and pay Social Security taxes.

Now, what Musk and others who claim Social Security is a "scam" or in "crisis" say is that in the future, there will not be enough workers [to pay] retiree[s] . . . the promised benefits. Musk says: "If you look at the future obligations of Social Security, it far exceeds the tax revenue . . . There's our present-day debt, but then there's our future obligations . . . So, when you look at the future obligations of Social Security, the actual national debt is like double what people think it is because of future obligations. . . . Basically, people are living way longer than expected, and there are fewer babies being born, so you have [many] people who are retired and that live for a long time and get retirement payments . . . However bad the financial situation is right now for the federal government, it'll be much worse in the future."

But while he's trying to get you to think this is a major problem or some deep fundamental flaw with . . . Social Security, it isn't. Every insurance plan has to make adjustments over time. If there are a lot of wildfires burning down houses, a company selling fire insurance might have to raise premiums. . . . The increased premiums might be small, but without them the program would go bankrupt. [This] doesn't mean, however, that we'd be justified in saying . . . fire insurance plans are a "Ponzi scheme" destined to go bankrupt.

The adjustments needed to make Social Security sustainable in the long term are minor. Yes, people are living longer and having fewer babies. That means there ultimately has to be some kind of adjustment to

either how much is being paid in, how much is being paid out, or both. Republicans want to cut benefits. Defenders of Social Security, instead, want to raise the money going into it by increasing taxes paid by the wealthy.

It is so interesting that we just saw that in the dialogue with my ideas with ANDY KIM.

The amount of taxes that would need to be raised in order to make Social Security solvent is negligible (the Social Security Administration has estimated that “increase in the combined payroll tax rate from 12.4 percent to 14.4 percent” to make the program sustainable for the next 75 years). As Dean Baker and Mark Weisbrot put it in the introduction to 1999’s Social Security [book entitled]: *The Phony Crisis*: “The only real threat to Social Security comes not from any fiscal or demographic constraints but from the political assaults on the program by would-be ‘reformers.’ If not for these attacks, the probability that Social Security ‘will not be there’ when anyone who is alive today retires would be about the same as the odds that the U.S. government will not be there.”

Of course, in the 25 years since this was written, the chances that the U.S. government itself someday “may not be there” could conceivably have gone up.

This is a funny author.

Musk is certainly trying to make sure as little of it remains as possible. But the point remains. The theory behind Social Security is sound. It is not . . . like an unsustainable con, although it’s also not like a savings account. It can easily be sustained indefinitely, with some minor adjustments to ensure that enough money is coming in to keep it going. (It is also the case that even the need to keep enough money flowing in is artificial. As Stephanie Kelton explains, the restrictions on Social Security’s ability to pay out are created by a legal choice, not an actual financial constraint facing the U.S. government, which could keep paying benefits even when Social Security’s funding “runs out” if it was authorized by Congress to do so.) Beware the rhetoric of those who describe it as in a “crisis” or being a scam. They either do not understand the fundamentals of how it works or they are deliberately trying to deceive you. (I cannot say for certain whether Musk is knowledgeable enough to understand the basics and is lying or simply cannot wrap his head around the basic way an old age insurance program works.)

The author continues:

As Alex Lawson of Social Security Works explained to me, the right has been trying to destroy Social Security since its inception. This is for a few reasons. First, a lot of vultures stand to benefit from privatization, just as the privatized “Medicare Advantage” program has enriched insurers like UnitedHealth. Second, the right, believing that individuals should be responsible for their own fates, has an ideological opposition to government social welfare programs—even if this results in a bunch of old people being poor. They see Social Security as an offensive “Big Government” intrusion into the free market, something that compels people to put money into a retirement program whether they want to or not. The problem is that most of the public doesn’t share this hatred for the concept behind Social Security, and the program is overwhelmingly popular [on both sides of the political aisle.] Because they have failed to win the ideological argument, the right must therefore convince the public of a different argument: That the program is collapsing and doomed and can only be “saved” through major benefit cuts, which will be stated as the euphemism of “raising the retirement age.”

Hence the propaganda about unsustainability and Ponzi schemes. This can be effective because if you don’t know much about how Social Security works, it’s easy to be convinced that there’s something fishy about its payment structure or that it is heading for some dire financial apocalypse. But this is not the case. Baker and Weisbrot are right that the threats to Social Security come from those who say they are trying to “save” it from a crisis. We need to have a clear understanding of what is going on so that we can fight to save a program that works just fine and can easily be made to continue providing retirement benefits to every subsequent generation of Americans, ideally ensuring that nobody has to endure old age in poverty.

So why are they cutting Social Security staff? Thousands of people. Again—I say this time and time again—I am standing here because this is not a usual time. I think our country is facing a growing crisis. But I am quoting so many Republicans because a lot of us who have run stuff know that you don’t just fire people and then realize the mistakes you have made and beg them to come back to work. They know that you don’t just fire people that do essential functions in a program before you have even done assessments of what your goals and ambitions are for Social Security.

It is clear that their goal and ambition isn’t to invest in customer service to improve the complaints that I have heard over the years about waits, unreturned calls, challenges at Social Security offices. That is not their ambition.

We have missed a big opportunity to come together in this Nation and start to really reimagine our government that works for people, that can do big things and serve folks. Instead, we are trying to demonize people; we are trying to lie about critical programs, calling this a Ponzi scheme; make up out of thin air that somehow we are paying thousands of people that are over 150 years old, fraudulently. We are better than that.

To that point, I just want to again make my facts clear. Here is an Associated Pressed fact-check from the President’s speech: “Tens of millions of dead people aren’t getting Social Security checks, despite Trump and Musk claims.”

The Trump administration is falsely claiming that tens of millions of dead people over 100 years old are receiving Social Security payments.

Over the past few days, President Donald Trump and billionaire adviser Elon Musk have said on social media and in press briefings that people who are 100, 200 and even 300 years old are improperly getting benefits—a “HUGE problem,” Musk wrote, as his Department of Government Efficiency digs into federal agencies to root out waste, fraud and abuse.

It is true that improper payments have been made, including some to dead people. But the numbers thrown out by Musk and the White House are overstated and misrepresent Social Security data.

Here are the facts:

What has the Trump administration said about payments to centenarians? On Tuesday, Trump said at a press briefing in Flor-

ida that “we have millions and millions of people over 100 years old” receiving Social Security benefits. “They’re obviously fraudulent or incompetent,” Trump said.

“If you take all of those millions of people off Social Security, all of a sudden we have a very powerful Social Security with people that are 80 and 70 and 90, but not 200 years old,” he said. He also said that there’s one person in the system listed as 360 years old.

Late Monday, Musk posted a slew of posts on his social media platform X, including: “Maybe Twilight is real and there are a lot of vampires collecting Social Security,” and “Having tens of millions of people marked in Social Security as ‘ALIVE’ when they are definitely dead is a HUGE problem. Obviously. Some of these people would have been alive before America existed as a country. Think about that for a second . . .”

On Wednesday, Social Security’s new acting commissioner, Lee Dudek, acknowledged recent reporting about the number of people older than age 100 who may be receiving benefits from Social Security. “The reported data are people in our records with a Social Security number who do not have a date of death associated with their record. These individuals are not necessarily receiving benefits.”

“I am confident that with DOGE’s help and the commitment of our executive team and workforce, that Social Security will continue to deliver for the American people,” Dudek said.

How big of a problem is Social Security fraud?

A July 2024 report from Social Security’s inspector general states that from fiscal years 2015 through 2022, the agency paid out almost \$8.6 trillion in benefits, including \$71.8 billion—or less than 1%—in improper payments. Most of the erroneous payments were overpayments to living people.

In addition, in early January, the U.S. Treasury clawed back more than \$31 million in a variety of federal payments—not just Social Security payments—that improperly went to dead people, a recovery that former Treasury official David Lebyrk said was “just the tip of the iceberg.”

The money was reclaimed as part of a five-month pilot program after Congress gave the Department of Treasury temporary access to the Social Security Administration’s “Full Death Master File” for three years as part of the omnibus appropriations bill in 2021. The SSA maintains the most complete federal database of individuals who have died, and the file contains more than 142 million records, which go back to 1899, according to the Treasury.

Treasury estimated in January that it would recover more than \$215 million during its three-year access period, which runs from December 2023 through 2026.

So are tens of millions of people over 100 years old receiving benefits?

No.

No. No. But the letters I read from scared people across the country show what happens when a President lies and when his unelected, biggest campaign contributor, the richest man in the world, just continue to make public statements to insinuate fear and doubt and chaos and then make announcements that they have to take back that they are going to end the call-in service, which so many seniors rely on.

Then they create more fear when people see that posted government buildings that are going to be sold at auction to the private sector are actually the addresses of their Social Security offices.

Why?

Everywhere I am going around my State and everywhere I have gone around the country in the last few weeks and my mom and her mostly Republican senior community are all up in arms and feel this fear—or the people that we have read about who write letters about losing sleep—and it is because of the chaos, the crass cruelty, the unjustified cuts and attacks on a program that is a bedrock between security and financial ruin for so many Americans.

Here is the Wall Street Journal writing about this, how Trump and Musk are undermining Social Security:

Dealing With Social Security Is Heading From Bad to Worse. The agency that administers benefits is cutting staff and restricting services as part of a Department of Government Efficiency review.

The Wall Street Journal writes:

The federal agency that administers Social Security benefits is facing a customer-service mess. The Social Security Administration is cutting staff, restricting what recipients can do over the phone and closing some local field offices that help people in person. The number of retirees claiming benefits has risen in recent years as baby boomers age.

Few federal agencies reach as far into Americans' lives as the Social Security Administration, which delivers a monthly check to some 70 million people. Many fear that the changes, part of President Trump's push to overhaul the federal government through the Department of Government Efficiency, are eroding confidence in the nearly 90-year-old program.

The Wall Street Journal continues:

Agency officials have acknowledged that because of a planned reduction in services over the phone, there will be longer wait and processing times. An estimated 75,000 to 85,000 additional visitors a week could show up at local field offices, according to an internal memo sent by Doris Diaz, the acting deputy commissioner for operations. (Details of the memo, which was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal, were reported earlier by the Washington Post.)

That is likely to tax the agency's 800 number, where people typically make appointments for office visits. Already, Social Security recipients have long complained about customer service.

Holly Lawrence, 64 years old, made several unsuccessful attempts to reach a human before she filed her Social Security claim online. The Washington, D.C.-based freelance journalist said she called the agency's 800 number several times starting in February. Each time, she got an automated voice that warned of a two-hour wait. Her calls were disconnected before she could leave a message or request a callback.

She gave up trying to reach a customer-service agent and created an online account on the agency's website on March 3. She had to wait two weeks for an account activation code to arrive in the mail before she could submit her claim. She is now waiting for that claim to be reviewed and processed.

Lawrence said she has virtually no retirement savings. "I'm financially strapped and cannot afford to get a financial adviser. It was important to me to be able to talk to someone at Social Security," she said, adding that she is concerned the customer-service delays she encountered could negatively affect others "who don't have the strength to be persistent."

The Wall Street Journal continues:

Social Security has a reputation as the "third rail" of American politics, a benefit to which elected officials make cuts at the risk of their own re-election. President Trump has vowed not to cut benefits. But he and DOGE's leader, Elon Musk, have made unfounded claims of widespread fraud in the program.

I am going to repeat that sentence by the Wall Street Journal:

[H]e and DOGE's leader, Elon Musk, have made unfounded claims of widespread fraud in the program.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said in a recent podcast interview that if Social Security checks were hypothetically delayed, it might catch those guilty of fraud because they would make "the loudest noise screaming, yelling and complaining."

Critics say turmoil at the agency is undermining trust in the safety-net programs.

"They're killing these programs from the inside," said Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a Democrat. "The result of which is, we don't know what they are doing to tear down the scaffolding that holds Social Security together."

DOGE has gained access to systems containing personal information but a federal judge has temporarily blocked those efforts. On Friday, Leland Duke, acting Social Security commissioner, threatened to shut down the agency because of the order, but later reversed course.

Duke, the acting commissioner, said the changes "are designed to make sure the right payment is to the right person at the right time. It's a common-sense measure."

Even before DOGE's plans went into motion, the agency's customer-service operation had been showing signs of strain.

Roughly 47% of the quarter million people who call Social Security's 800-number on an average day have gotten through to a representative this year. That is down from nearly 60% in 2024. The average time to wait for a callback is over two hours.

There has been a steady decline in the agency's staff, and DOGE plans to cut employment by another 12% this year. That would bring the total number of employees to about 50,000, from about 57,000 today and nearly 68,000 in 2010.

"Customer service has been going downhill for years," said Bill Sweeney, senior vice president at AARP. "It's going to get worse."

Some of the Social Security Administration's changes amount to cuts in services.

The Wall Street Journal continues:

Starting March 31, people who want to file for retirement, survivor or disability benefits or change their direct deposit information can no longer complete the process by phone, the agency said Tuesday. Instead they must do so online or at a field office.

The agency said it is stopping phone claims as part of an effort to reduce fraud and strengthen identity-proofing procedures. The Social Security agency has estimated that improper payments represent 0.3% of total benefits.

Duke acknowledged that recent changes, including the shift away from claiming on the phone, are likely to drive up the numbers making appointments at field offices over the next 60 days. He said field employees would be trained over the next two weeks to respond to the changes.

"We're going to adjust our policy and our procedures to adapt to that volume," he said in a recent call with reporters. "These changes are not intended to hurt our customers."

Duke said Monday in a call with advocates that the phone service policy change

and quick timeline were directed by the White House, according to people familiar with the call.

Directed by the White House.

Kathleen Romig, director of Social Security and disability policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, says it isn't clear why the agency chose to discontinue identity verification over the phone, while allowing it online and in person. She and other advocates say that by discontinuing the phone option, the agency is creating hurdles for those who lack internet service or live far from a field office.

The agency has also largely stopped serving walk-in customers in field offices, said Maria Freese, senior legislative representative at the nonprofit National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare. Most wanting in-person service must book appointments on the 800-number.

In February, 45% of people who scheduled a phone or in-person appointment to file a claim got one within 28 days.

DOGE plans to close nearly 50 of the agency's approximately 1,200 field offices, according to Social Security Works, although a spokeswoman for the nonprofit said some of the offices on the list "don't seem to exist."

Frank Bisignano, chairman and CEO of Fiserv, Inc, has been picked by Trump to serve as [Social Security's] commissioner and will appear before the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday.

I mean, this is the Wall Street Journal pointing out utter incompetence, utter incompetence. And they are rolling back, trying to catch up, but they don't seem to care, and the way they are going about this they are hurting seniors. They are undermining the security of the program.

The title of the Wall Street Journal's article is the best, it is taking services, Social Security services are now going from bad to worse, under this leadership, who promised they were going to serve people.

I see the Senator standing, and I will yield for a question while retaining the floor, if he has one.

Mr. MURPHY. Senator BOOKER, I am going to pose to you a pretty simple question here, but, first, let me lay down a little bit of a predicate.

You know, we have heard already some talk tonight about this extraordinary statement, but not terribly surprising, from the Secretary of Commerce, who is a close friend of the President, somebody who is very close to all of the decisions being made in the White House, where he said, you know, that if a Social Security recipient misses their check for a month, then they should not complain.

My mother-in-law wouldn't complain.

That is easy for him to say, you know, maybe you wouldn't complain if your son-in-law was a billionaire. You probably are not going to be harmed by missing a Social Security check if you have got a billionaire in the family.

But 99.99 percent of Americans do not have a billionaire that they can get on the phone if they miss a month, and 1 month's Social Security check disappearing is a cataclysm for a lot of families.

As I was listening to you, I just did a little bit of, you know, easy, back-of-

the-napkin math. So the average Social Security check, on a monthly basis, in this country is somewhere around \$2,000. Obviously, it varies based on how much money you put in and what your income was, but, on average, it is about \$2,000.

Now, some Americans have supplemental retirement income, but fewer and fewer do today because it is just not the case any longer that employers are going to provide for you a defined benefit plan. So if you were working minimum wage your entire life or if you were working a low-wage job, you are not going to have money to put away in Social Security.

I remember during one of my walks across the State of Connecticut, spending about half an hour walking with an elderly gentleman in Willimantic, CT, and he told me a story that is not atypical. He worked his entire life. Most of his adult life he worked for Walmart. He was really proud of working for Walmart. He helped a whole bunch of people in his community. He was working for a great American company, a company he was proud of. He was helping people every single day that lived in his neighborhood get what they needed when they came into the store.

But you know the wage he was making at Walmart. He was making very little, and they didn't have any defined benefit plan. They would let him save a little bit of money if he could find the means, but he couldn't because every single dime that he made from Walmart had to go to rent and groceries and medicine and cell phone bill and transportation.

And so he worked for 20 years at Walmart, and when he retired, do you know how much he had in savings? Zero. Zero. And he felt like he had done everything people had asked him for. He worked for a great American company. He helped people. He worked full time. He didn't miss time. He didn't goof around.

And when he retired, he had nothing—nothing—saved. So the Social Security check, which to him was probably about \$2,000 a month, was everything he had. And he is walking with me explaining to me what his life is like today. He was coming out of the liquor store, and that was one of the things he did every day was go down to the liquor store and, you know, buy a nip or two and, you know, just pass a couple hours. He didn't like to spend a lot of time in his house because he has roommates.

He lives in a small apartment with two other guys, strangers. He doesn't know them. And he says to me as we are walking: This is not how I expected my life to go. I thought if I worked my entire life and I played by the rules and I worked hard, you know, I would have a little bit more dignified retirement than this. I share a room with two other guys that I don't know.

And that is the reality for a lot of Americans. That is the reality for a lot

of retirees. You know, \$2,000 is the average Social Security check. I don't know why I picked Tallahassee, but I just picked Tallahassee. I said what is the average one-bedroom rent in Tallahassee? It is \$1,200, utilities are probably a couple hundred dollars, the average senior citizen spends \$500 a month on food. Rent, utilities, food, that is it. That is your \$2,000. You have nothing left if you are 1 of the 7 million Americans who rely only on Social Security like my friend from Willimantic.

You have nothing left for medicine, for transportation. You have got nothing left for a cell phone. You have nothing left to go to the movies once a month. You have nothing left for presents for your grandkids for Christmas or for their birthday. If you are relying on Social Security—and many people who have worked their entire life are—you go without that check for 1 month, your whole life falls apart.

And so this "cavalierness" that Musk and Trump have about Social Security, that the billionaires that advise them have about Social Security: Don't worry about it if you miss a check for a month or 2 months. You are a fraudster. You are trying to defraud the government if you complain about missing a Social Security check. It is so disconnected from reality.

I know we are going to talk later today about the plans to shut down the Department of Education. It shows this similar disdain for public education, the way that they are showing a disdain for working Americans who are relying on Social Security as their primary means of retirement income, the disdain for the 40 million working Americans who rely on Medicaid.

And it is not hard to understand why, because if you are a billionaire, if you are Elon Musk, if you are Donald Trump, you don't have to rely on the public school system. Your kids go to fancy private schools. You will never need to rely on Medicaid. You have lived fortunate lives—in Donald Trump's case because he was born into wealth. You will get a Social Security check, but that is not going to be your primary retirement.

And so you can understand, if you put a bunch of billionaires in charge of the government who don't lead lives that are remotely connected to how average people live, they will say things like Social Security is just one big Ponzi scheme, and that is the big one to eliminate or, you know what, America will be all right if we impose \$880 billion in cuts to the insurance program for 24 percent of Americans or let's shut down the Department of Education because, I don't know, public education doesn't matter to me.

So I think it is just the reality that we are living in today in which we have people who are making these decisions who just don't understand how normal people's lives work and, in particular, how a person's life falls apart if they have any diminution in their Social Security income, when the average

check is \$2,000 a month and the average expenses in most cities for a senior citizen who relies on Social Security are going to be far higher than \$2,000 a month.

Here is my question for you. You laid out what is going on with Social Security today. It is like the opposite of efficiency. It is called the Department of Government Efficiency. And what we know for certain in the Social Security system is that everything they are doing has the intent of making the system less efficient, right? You don't just close dozens of offices and shut down the phone system to make the system more efficient. You do that to make the system less efficient.

And so I am trying to figure out why, right? I am trying to figure out why. And I will give you, you know, two theories and then let you tell me if you think I am right or I am wrong. It could be a pretext to eradicate the whole system.

What did they say about USAID? They said that USAID was a corrupt enterprise. It was corrupt. No evidence of corruption in USAID. No evidence of corruption, no allegations of specific corruption, but they just made these accusations that USAID was criminal. Musk and Trump said this: It is a criminal enterprise. It is a corrupt enterprise. And that became their justification to eliminate it. Within weeks, USAID, one of the most important vehicles of U.S. national security was gone—was gone. They didn't run on that. Nobody saw that coming.

It was 2 weeks of allegations about criminality and corruption, and then USAID vanished. And people were like looking around, what happened? They didn't tell us they were going to do that, and now it is gone. They certainly didn't run on eliminating Social Security or cutting people's benefits. But, boy, the playbook seems a little familiar here that all of a sudden there are these lies being told. Lies being told. Let's say what it is about the corruption inside Social Security.

As you said, the improper benefit payments are minuscule, right, .3 percent of overall payments.

And so is this a pretext to ultimately make big cuts in Social Security or, alternatively, is it just part of a plan to just sort of put the entire country on edge, right? To just make everybody wake up in the morning wondering whether they are next, right? Is it my Medicaid benefit that is going to be cut? Is Social Security going to be there for me if I am a Federal employee? You know, is my job here next week?

And is that a means of distracting you from the corruption, the thievery that is happening at the highest levels of government? Is that in service of an agenda to try to convert this country from democracy to something else, if everybody is just so focused on the next hit, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, my son losing his Federal job? Is that a means to ultimately try

to drive an agenda through the back door while people are looking at the threats coming at them through the front door? It is clearly not about efficiency. I mean, that is what we know. The changes they are making to Social Security are not about efficiency, so the question is, What is the agenda here if it is not efficiency?

Mr. BOOKER. And, again, you and I and the Presiding Officer, there are a lot of people here I know that operate from just a place of just like decency. There are problems with government. We need to fix them. We need to make government more efficient. We need to deal with the national debt.

There are so many things that people on the right and the left don't agree on. You and I can agree that, God bless America, the government could be a lot more efficient.

But the question is, They are not playing on the level. There are lies about USAID like, I don't know, 5 million condoms going to Gaza or something outrageous and easily proven false, time and time again. The President of the United States, again, this doesn't shock people anymore, he is a President, more than any other modern President, by independent fact-checkers, has been proven to lie over and over again.

But as I sat there listening to his speech, and he just goes on and on about transgender mice when that was proven to be utterly a lie or else somebody just misreading the kind of mice that are used in medical experiments which have a similar word.

So are they lying in order to attack these programs? DOGE is insidious in the fact that they keep posting things and then having to pull them down because, just, independent folks.

And I have article after article—we are so far behind on this agenda of things to get through, I am not going to read them all, some of them I will submit to the RECORD—but not people on the left calling them out for what they are doing and saying being a lie about Social Security.

So you are pointing out a pattern. First, they tell terrible lies to try to whip up public sentiment against entities created in a bipartisan way, by the way.

Mr. MURPHY. Right.

Mr. BOOKER. Using congressional powers, approving spending, approving programs, approving Agencies. Let's create incredible lies. Magnify them on social media, try to spread them with our influencers and everybody. So now people believe that somehow, oh, the President talked about all this money going to transgender mice. That is a lie.

But we are going to use that as an excuse to attack the scientific funding. We are going to use that as an excuse to attack Medicaid. We are going to use that as an excuse to pull the people fighting Ebola out of East Africa.

And so I was told by a colleague of mine, a Republican colleague of mine:

When you come here, don't try to get in the head of your colleague and understand what their motivations are.

But this, to me, is a pattern in which they are trying to undermine public confidence. And the result of this pattern has seniors—letter after letter I wrote—using things like “I am losing sleep.” “I am terrified.” “I am scared.” “Help me, please.” Telling the most painful stories about retirement insecurity, about health challenges.

And so, again, I have this expectation, whether you are a Republican or Democratic President, you don't insinuate fear amongst vulnerable communities. You don't insinuate fears amongst our elders who deserve respect and deserve to retire with dignity. You don't do that. You stand boldly in front of them and say: Do you know what? There are some things we are going to improve. We are going to try to bring the best minds in America to make the best customer service because every independent group has been saying that the customer service is failing. Yeah, we want to go after fraud and abuse. We are not going to do it. The first thing we are going to do is fire the inspectors general who have a better record than Elon Musk does over this last decade rooting out fraud and abuse under Democrat and Republican Presidents. It just doesn't add up. It is not on the level.

So before I allow you to ask this next question: What does this amount to, Senator MURPHY? Ultimately, what this amounts to is an attack on the programs, the healthcare, the services, the retirement security that millions of Americans rely on. And often, for them, what they are relying on is the difference between safety and security and chaos and destitution. I am not exaggerating that.

When somebody's Social Security check is the only income they have and they have already downsized—as you said, brought in roommates—doing everything they can to cut costs because, under this President, costs are going up.

This is why we have to stand and not let this happen.

Mr. MURPHY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. So there is also a third agenda here. We were not necessarily both here at this time, but a few Republican administrations ago, there was an attempt to privatize Social Security, to take, you know, the corpus and move that money into the hands of the private sector for them to manage the money and, of course, charge a fee or a commission for the management of the money. The Social Security trust fund, if sort of fully handed over to investors on Wall Street, could make a lot of money for that industry.

The American people rose up against that. It was stopped in its tracks. But that is still a priority for a lot of allies

of the President, to get their hands on that money inside Social Security.

And, again, I am previewing a future conversation, but I keep on making the analogy to what is happening inside the education space because those same industries—whether it was the investment banks or private-equity firms—get wide-eyed at our public education dollars as well because they would love to get their hands on those public education dollars and have private equity companies running our elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools and skimming a little bit of money off the top to pay back their investors.

And so, you know, the other potential agenda here is to attack the public administration of Social Security, attack the public administration of our public schools in order to shift that administration—and the oversight of the investments in the case of the Social Security—to the private sector so that the President can hand those functions and that oversight to friends in the private sector. And, once again, it just becomes a money-making vehicle for folks who are already doing very well instead of an exercise in just trying to promote governance.

Instead of the agenda simply being the education of our kids or the administration of a benefit program, it just becomes about making somebody else money.

I pose that as a question to my friend because we saw this attempt to try to privatize Social Security, and you can certainly see at the end of this assault, this false assault on the inefficiency of the public administration, the solution being to turn the program over to the private sector, the privatization of Social Security that many Republicans have wanted for a long time finally coming to fruition.

Mr. BOOKER. Right. But that is the problem, right? Is that if you have an idea, bring it. Let's have an actual debate. Let's bring in experts. Let's have a debate.

The person you are talking about, Bush, who had that idea, he had the good sense to say: Do You know what? I am not going to try to kill the Agency. I am not going to lay off thousands of their employees. I am not going to drive the services it provides, make them worse, to be called out by right-leaning newspapers and right-leaning writers. I am actually going to bring my idea forward, and let's have the debate in Congress. Let's bring people together. Let's hold the hearings. Let's have the conversation.

I can deal with that because—this is going to surprise you, Senator MURPHY—I have had conclusions about policy positions that I have changed over the years. When I had a debate, I had a contest of ideas, people have persuaded me.

But that is not the way Trump operates. He tried to kill healthcare without a plan. The powerful letter I read by John McCain about why he voted

no, it was because it was first: Kill this thing that people rely on. Don't worry. Trust me. We will figure it out later.

That is what is happening with Medicaid right now. There is no conversation about how to better provide healthcare to the tens of millions of people that rely on Medicaid, from our seniors to expectant mothers to people with disabilities—no conversation. They are just sending people into dark rooms and saying: Here is \$380 billion I need. Find a way to cut it. Let's kill it and see what happens.

Mr. MURPHY. Ready, fire, aim.

Mr. BOOKER. Ready, fire, aim.

Senator MURPHY, I prepared for so many days on this, and we are talking about the points so I am going to submit—there are lots of articles here that I am going to submit to the RECORD.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a Washington Post article about “Long waits, waves of calls, website crashes: Social Security is breaking down.”

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

LONG WAITS, WAVES OF CALLS, WEBSITE CRASHES: SOCIAL SECURITY IS BREAKING DOWN
(By Lisa Rein and Hannah Natanson)

The Social Security Administration website crashed four times in 10 days this month, blocking millions of retirees and disabled Americans from logging in to their online accounts because the servers were overloaded. In the field, office managers have resorted to answering phones at the front desk as receptionists because so many employees have been pushed out.

But the agency no longer has a system to monitor customers' experience with these services, because that office was eliminated as part of the cost-cutting efforts led by Elon Musk.

And the phones keep ringing. And ringing.

The federal agency that delivers \$1.5 trillion a year in earned benefits to 73 million retired workers, their survivors and poor and disabled Americans is engulfed in crisis—further undermining its ability to provide reliable and quick service to vulnerable customers, according to internal documents and more than two dozen current and former agency employees and officials, customers and others who interact with Social Security.

Financial services executive Frank Bisignano is scheduled to face lawmakers Tuesday during a Senate confirmation hearing as President Donald Trump's pick to become the permanent commissioner.

For now, the agency is run by a caretaker leader in his sixth week on the job who has raced to push out more than 12 percent of the staff of 57,000. He has conceded that the agency's phone service “sucks” and acknowledged that Musk's U.S. DOGE Service is really in charge, pushing a single-minded mission to find benefits fraud despite vast evidence that the problem is overstated.

The turmoil is leaving many retirees, disabled claimants and legal immigrants who need Social Security cards with less access or shut out of the system altogether, according to those familiar with the problems.

“What's going on is the destruction of the agency from the inside out, and it's accelerating,” Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) said in an interview. “I have people approaching me all the time in their 70s and 80s, and they're beside themselves. They don't know what's coming.”

King's home state has the country's oldest population. “What they're doing now is unconscionable,” he said.

Leland Dudek—the accidental leader elevated to acting commissioner after he fed data to Musk's team behind his bosses' backs—has issued rapid-fire policy changes that have created chaos for front-line staff. Under pressure from the secretive Musk team, Dudek has pushed out dozens of officials with years of expertise in running Social Security's complex benefit and information technology systems. Others have left in disgust.

The moves have upended an agency that, despite the popularity of its programs, has been underfunded for years, faces potential insolvency in a decade and has been led by four commissioners in five months—just one of them Senate-confirmed. The latest controversy came last week, when Dudek threatened to shut down operations in response to a federal judge's ruling that Dudek claimed would leave no one with access to beneficiaries' personal information to serve them.

Alarmed lawmakers are straining to answer questions from angry constituents in their districts. Calls have flooded into congressional offices. The AARP announced on Monday that more than 2,000 retirees per week have called the organization since early February—double the usual number—with concerns about whether benefits they paid for during their working careers will continue. Social Security is the primary source of income for about 40 percent of older Americans.

Trump has said repeatedly that the administration “won't touch” Social Security, a promise that aides say applies to benefit levels that can only be adjusted by Congress. But in just six weeks, the cuts to staffing and offices have already taken a toll on access to benefits, officials and advocates say.

CREATING A FIRE

With aging technology systems and a \$15 billion budget that has stayed relatively flat over a decade, Social Security was already struggling to serve the public amid an explosion of retiring baby boomers. The staff that reviews claims for two disability programs was on life support following massive pandemic turnover—and still takes 233 days on average to review an initial claim.

But current and former officials, advocates and others who interact with the agency—many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution—said Social Security has been damaged even further by the rapid cuts and chaos of Trump's first two months in office. Many current and former officials fear it's part of a long-sought effort by conservatives to privatize all or part of the agency.

“They're creating a fire to require them to come and put it out,” said one high-ranking official who took early retirement this month.

Dudek, who was elevated from a mid-level data analyst in the anti-fraud office, hurried to cut costs when he took over in mid-February, canceling research contracts, offering early-retirement incentives and buyouts across the agency, and consolidating programs and regional offices. Entire offices, including those handling civil rights and modernization, were driven out. The 10 regional offices that oversee field operations were slashed to four.

“I do not want to destroy the agency,” he said in an interview Monday. “The president wants it to succeed by cutting out the red tape to improve service while improving security.”

Musk's DOGE team began poring through Social Security's massive trove of private

data on millions of Americans, working in a fourth-floor conference room at the Woodlawn, Maryland, headquarters, with blackout curtains on the windows and an armed security guard posted outside.

Their obsession with false claims that millions of deceased people were fraudulently receiving benefits consumed the DOGE team at first. Then came new mandates designed to address alleged fraud: Direct deposit transactions and identity authentication that affect almost everyone receiving benefits will no longer be able to be done by phone.

Customers with computers will be directed to go through the process online—and those without access to one to wait in line at their local field office. A change announced internally last week will require legal immigrants with authorization to work in the United States and newly naturalized citizens to apply for or update their Social Security cards in person, eliminating a long-standing practice that sent the cards automatically through the mail.

“We realize this is a significant change and there will be a significant impact to customers,” Doris Diaz, the deputy commissioner of operations, told the field staff on Monday during a briefing on the changes, a recording of which was obtained by The Washington Post. She said the agency was “working on a process” for homeless and homebound customers who cannot use computers or come into an office—and acknowledged that service levels will decline.

In the weeks before that Monday briefing, phone calls to Social Security surged—with questions from anxious callers wondering whether their benefits had been cut, if they would be cut and desperate to get an in-person field office appointment. That is if they could get through to a live person.

Depending on the time of day, a recorded message tells callers that their wait on hold will last more than 120 minutes or 180 minutes. Some report being on hold for four or five hours. A callback function was only available three out of 12 times when a reporter for The Post called the toll-free line last week, presumably because the queue that day was so long that the call would not be returned by close of business.

The recording that Kathy Martinez, 66, heard when she called the toll-free number two weeks ago from her home in the Bay Area said her hold time would be more than three hours—she was calling to ask what her retirement check would come to if she filed for benefits now or waited until she turns 70. She hung up and tried again last week at 7 a.m. Pacific time. The wait was more than 120 minutes, but she was offered a callback option, and in two hours she spoke with a “phenomenally kind person who called me,” she said.

Martinez said she wants to wait to file for benefits to maximize the size of her check. But “I'm kind of thinking, I wonder if I should take it now. When I apply, I will do it over the phone. But will there still be a phone system?”

NOT ACCEPTABLE

Aging, inefficient phone systems have dogged Social Security for years. A modernization contract with Verizon started under the first Trump administration suffered from multiple delays, system crashes and other problems. As commissioner during the last year of the Biden administration, former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley moved the project to a new contractor, Amazon Web Services, and data shows that the average wait time for the toll-free line was down to 50 minutes, half of today's average time on hold. But O'Malley ran out of time to switch the new system to field office phones, he said.

Now a perfect storm has overtaken the system. Turnover that's normally higher than 10 percent has worsened at the 24 call centers across the country. Some employees took early retirement and buyout offers—a number Dudek said was “not huge,” but that current and former officials estimate could be significant.

Shonda Johnson, a vice president representing 5,000 call center staff at the American Federation of Government Employees Council 220, said the job's low pay—starting salary is \$32,000 a year—anger at a return-to-office mandate after years of telework, rapid policy changes and frustration with how the Trump administration is treating federal employees have hurt morale to the point that people aren't giving their all to the job.

“When you're facing threats yourself, it kind of prevents you from being totally there for the public you're servicing,” she said.

Asked about degrading phone service, Dudek told reporters in a call last week that “a 24 percent answer rate is not acceptable.”

“I want people who want to get to a person to get to a person.” He said “all options are on the table” to improve phone service, including outsourcing some call center service. On Monday, Dudek said the agency is working with U.S. Postal Service on an agreement to take on new requirements to verify claimants' identities.

The new limits on phone transactions don't take effect until next week, but field offices have been deluged for weeks, even as DOGE is targeting an unspecified number of field and hearing offices for closure over the next three years.

In one office in central Indiana, the phone lines are jammed by 9 a.m. with retirees by the hundreds, taxing the beleaguered staff of less than a dozen who were already responsible for nearly 70,000 claimants across the state, according to one employee, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. The employee said the questions have become predictable: What is the U.S. DOGE Service doing to Social Security? Will the office close? Will my benefits continue?

The employees, with no new training yet on the impending changes, have few answers. “I hope we're going to be here,” the employee tells caller after caller. “But I can't guarantee anything.”

Complicated benefits cases are falling by the wayside, the employee said. Online claims, which are completed by field staff, are backed up. “There is just no time to breathe or get anything else done,” she said. “We used to be efficient.”

Another employee in a regional office said the staff was told at a recent briefing that field offices across the country are seeing “exponential growth” in foot traffic.

The elderly are not only calling, but showing up at brick-and-mortar buildings to ask about the DOGE-led changes. In one Philadelphia office, the federal government's mandated return-to-office edict has left 1,200 staffers competing for about 300 parking spots each day, according to an employee. Staff wake up as early as 4:30 a.m. to try to snag a space, but many still fail, leading some to buy backup spots for \$200 a month nearby.

As morale has cratered, some employees have stopped wearing business clothes to the office and now come to work in jeans and a T-shirt because, as they tell colleagues, they no longer take pride in their work, the employee said.

OFF THE CHARTS

Scammers are already taking advantage of the chaotic moment, according to internal emails obtained by The Post. Last week,

staff in several offices warned employees that seniors were reporting receiving emails from fake accounts pretending to be linked to Social Security. The messages asked recipients to verify their identity to keep receiving benefits, per the emails.

“Sounds like scammers are jumping on this press release to trick the elderly,” one Social Security staffer wrote to colleagues on Thursday, referring to the agency's announcement of the in-person verification program.

In Baltimore, an employee who works on critical payment systems said nearly a quarter of his team is already gone or will soon be out the door due to resignations and retirements. Talented software developers and analysts were quick to secure high-paying new roles in the private sector, he said—and the reduction in highly skilled staff is already having consequences.

His office is supposed to complete several software update and modernization processes required by law within the next few weeks and months, he said. But with the departures, it seems increasingly likely that they will miss those deadlines.

His team is also called on to fix complicated cases in which technology glitches mistakenly stop payments. But many of the experts for those fixes are exiting.

“That has to get cleaned up on a case-by-case basis, and the experts in how to do that are leaving,” the Baltimore employee said. “We will have cases that get stuck, and they're not going to be able to get fixed. People could be out of benefits for months.”

Meanwhile, a DOGE-imposed spending freeze has left many field offices without paper, pens and the phone headsets staff need to do their jobs communicating with callers—at the exact moment phone calls are spiking, the employee in Indiana said.

The freeze drove all federal credit cards to a \$1 limit. Social Security saw the number of its approved purchasers reduced to about a dozen people for 1,300 offices, said one agency employee in the Northeast.

Each of these purchasers must seek greenlighting from higher-ups for anything other than a list of 12 specific preapproved transactions, according to emails obtained by The Post. The list includes “shipping costs,” “phone bills,” “Legionella testing” and “services to support fire safety and emergency response.” It does not include basic office supplies.

The field office in Portland, Oregon, is so slammed that the claims staff has told advocates to send questions or information by fax because they can't get to the phones, according to Chase Stowell, case management supervisor for Assist, a nonprofit group that helps the disabled apply for benefits, many of whom are homeless.

“The attrition rates in Portland are off the charts,” Stowell said. “They just don't pick up the phone. They were already short-staffed. They've told us they just don't trust that there's a reliable system to get ahold of them by voicemail.”

The service issues keep bubbling up to members of Congress. Hundreds of Maryland residents turned out for a town hall meeting last week hosted by Baltimore County Council member Pat Young about a mile from Social Security headquarters.

Asked by one retiree in the audience to provide “a little bit of hope” that his Social Security benefits would not be cut, Sen. Angela Alsobrooks (D-Maryland) conceded, “The truth of the matter is that we don't know what they intend.”

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you to the Presiding Officer and my friend whom I am keeping up at 3 a.m. He is a kind and generous man to be here.

Here is a closure of Social Security offices, 47 closures across the country in red States and blue States, everywhere between. Closures of Social Security offices. I know everybody is talking about cutting Social Security, but what they are doing right now—right now—is grinding the services of Social Security, grinding them down.

The article from the Associated Press, “A list of the Social Security offices across the US expected to close this year,” can be found online at <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-offices-closures-doge-trump-b2b1a5b2ba4fb968abc3379bf90715ff>.

I want to read some of the places: Alabama, 634—this is without the rest of the language I just put in the record, but just for folks out there who are watching. These are the places, Social Security offices that provide really important services to your community, that this administration and Elon Musk are closing: Alabama, 634 Broad Street; Arkansas, 965 Holiday Drive, Forrest City; 4083 Jefferson Avenue, Texarkana.

In the great State of Colorado, they are closing 825 North Crest Drive, Grand Junction. In Florida, they are closing 4740 Dairy Road in Melbourne. In Georgia, they are closing 1338 Broadway in Columbus. In Kentucky, they are closing 825 High Street in Hazard. In Louisiana, they are closing 178 Civic Center Drive, Houma.

In Mississippi, there are three places they are closing: 4717 26th Street, Meridian—Meridian, excuse me, to the great people who live there—604 Yalobusha Street in Greenwood, 2383 Sunset Drive in Grenada, MS. In Montana, they are closing 3701 American Way.

They are closing Social Security offices in North Carolina: 730 Roanoke Avenue, Roanoke Rapids. They are closing 2123 Lakeside Drive in Franklin, NC. They are closing 2805 Charles Boulevard in Greenville, NC—I know that town. They are closing 1865 West City Drive, Elizabeth City, NC. North Dakota, they are closing 414 20th Avenue SW—forgive me the great people who live in this community—Minot. I am sure I am butchering it.

In Nevada, where my mom lives, in the city my mom lives, they are closing 701 Bridger Avenue, Las Vegas.

In New York, 75 South Broadway, White Plains—my mom worked there—and 332 Main Street in Poughkeepsie, NY. In Ohio, 30 North Diamond Street, Mansfield. In Oklahoma, 1610 SW Lee Boulevard. In Texas, they are closing two offices: 1122 North University Drive. I know the people are going to write me letters that I am mispronouncing their town names. Nacogdoches?

Anyone from Texas here? No?

I am sorry. 8208 NE Zac Lentz Parkway. In West Virginia, they are closing 1103 George Kostas Drive. In Wyoming, they are closing 79 Winston Drive, Rock Springs, WY.

They are cutting the Social Security staff. How deeply are they cutting?

They are cutting thousands. We have already talked about it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from the Associated Press, "Social Security Administration could cut up to 50% of its workforce."

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

[February 27, 2025]

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION COULD CUT UP TO 50% OF ITS WORKFORCE

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Social Security Administration is preparing to lay off at least 7,000 people from its workforce of 60,000 according to a person familiar with the agency's plans who is not authorized to speak publicly. The workforce reduction, according to a second person who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, could be as high as 50%.

It's unclear how the layoffs will directly impact the benefits of the 72.5 million Social Security beneficiaries, which include retirees and children who receive retirement and disability benefits. However, advocates and Democratic lawmakers warn that layoffs will reduce the agency's ability to serve recipients in a timely manner.

Some say cuts to the workforce are, in effect, a cut in benefits.

Later Friday, the agency sent out a news release outlining plans for "significant workforce reductions," employee reassignments from "non-mission critical positions to mission critical direct service positions," and an offer of voluntary separation agreements. The agency said in its letter to workers that reassignments "may be involuntary and may require retraining for new workloads."

The layoffs are part of the Trump administration's intensified efforts to shrink the size of the federal workforce through the Department of Government Efficiency, run by President Donald Trump's advisor Elon Musk.

A representative from the Social Security Administration did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

The people familiar with the agency's plans say that SSA's new acting commissioner Leland Dudek held a meeting this week with management and told them they had to produce a plan that eliminated half of the workforce at SSA headquarters in Washington and at least half of the workers in regional offices.

In addition, the termination of office leases for Social Security sites across the country are detailed on the DOGE website, which maintains a "Wall of Receipts," which is a self-described "transparent account of DOGE's findings and actions." The site states that leases for dozens of Social Security sites across Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and other states have been or will be ended.

"The Social Security Administration is already chronically understaffed. Now, the Trump Administration wants to demolish it," said Nancy Altman, president of Social Security Works, an advocacy group for the popular public benefit program.

Altman said the reductions in force "will deny many Americans access to their hard-earned Social Security benefits. Field offices around the country will close. Wait times for the 1-800 number will soar."

Social Security is one of the nation's largest and most popular social programs. A January poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that two-thirds of U.S. adults think the country is spending too little on Social Security.

The program faces a looming bankruptcy date if it is not addressed by Congress. The May 2024 Social Security and Medicare trustees' report states that Social Security's trust funds—which cover old age and disability recipients—will be unable to pay full benefits beginning in 2035. Then, Social Security would only be able to pay 83% of benefits.

Like other agencies, DOGE has embedded into the Social Security Administration as part of Trump's January executive order, which has drawn concerns from career officials.

This month, the Social Security Administration's former acting commissioner Michelle King stepped down from her role at the agency after DOGE requested access to Social Security recipient information, according to two people familiar with the official's departure who were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) said in a statement that "a plan like this will result in field office closures that will hit seniors in rural communities the hardest."

Other news organizations, including The American Prospect and The Washington Post, have reported that half of the Social Security Administration's workforce could be on the chopping block.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you. The article that I won't read out of generosity to my dear friend that is presiding, but it details in painful ways what these cuts could mean to people in the country.

Just trying to move a little quicker through my documents because I am way behind.

The impact of these cuts—one of the big places they are going to impact is in rural America, already suffering so much. There is a lot of sources that are talking about the rural areas of our Nation they are going to cut.

And I would like to enter into the RECORD another Associated Press article entitled "New Social Security requirements pose barriers to rural communities without internet, transportation." A new requirement where Social Security recipients go online or in person to a field office to access key benefits instead of just making a phone call will be difficult for many people to meet.

This is an article from March 22, which can be found online at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/new-social-security-rules-present-barriers-rural-communities-120054669>.

Thank you very much to the kind friend who is up with me late—or early, I should say.

One more article I want to ask for the RECORD. I feel like I can take liberties with the Presiding Officer because I have known him for 20-plus years, consider him a real friend. He married up, and he is going to teach me how to do that.

I guess I am not allowed to insult a colleague on this. That is a violation of rule 19, I think, but that is a joke.

But you did marry up. You know that.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. I did.

Mr. BOOKER. So this is former Social Security officers who are speaking out about what is happening. People who worked at the Agency see what is

happening. Two former senior officials at the Social Security Administration—one under a Democratic President, one under a Republican President—wrote this column published in The Hill. The title of the column is "Social Security faces a crisis with staff cuts, closures."

Again, these are folks from both sides of the aisle yelling into the wilderness, hoping that more people will understand what is happening to Social Security, what these cuts in staff are actually going to do to the quality of life for millions of Americans who rely on Social Security, disproportionately impacting people that are living in rural areas.

Red States, blue States, Republicans, Democrats—this is not a normal time, America. The bedrock commitment made is being undermined by the most powerful man in our country and the richest man in the world.

The title of the article, "Social Security faces a crisis with staff cuts and closures," written by, again, somebody who worked under a Republican, somebody who worked under a Democrat.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have that printed in the RECORD.

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

SOCIAL SECURITY FACES A CRISIS WITH STAFF CUTS, CLOSURES

(By Jason Fichtner and Kathleen Romig)

The Social Security Administration is in crisis, and people's benefits are at risk.

We do not say this lightly. We both served in senior roles at the Social Security Administration—one of us under a Democratic president and the other under a Republican. Both of us have decades of expertise on Social Security and related systems. We know from experience that our Social Security system is resilient and has overcome many challenges. The administration of the programs Social Security delivers is in greater danger now than ever before.

Over the last month, the Social Security Administration has announced plans to cut at least 7,000 staff and consolidate service delivery by closing six regional offices. According to the Trump administration's acting Social Security commissioner, these cuts are driven by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency.

The Social Security Administration was already facing serious customer service challenges, even prior to these cuts. These sudden, seemingly indiscriminate cuts would risk jeopardizing Americans' access to the benefits they have earned.

When Americans claim their benefits, or want to resolve an issue, they have three options: Go to a field office, call Social Security's 800 number or go online to SSA.gov. These cuts will affect all three options. It will mean lines around the block at field offices, even longer wait times on the already overburdened 800 number, and possibly even a slower, glitchier website.

Also, due to a newly announced policy, millions of people won't even have the option to use the phone and will have to go to overcrowded field offices instead.

Compromising customer service and access to benefits is more than an administrative issue. It is a de facto cut to a program Americans across the political spectrum support and rely on for financial security. Americans

will find it far more stressful and time-consuming to access the Social Security benefits they've earned. Some may not be able to claim benefits, or resolve issues, at all. People may have to wait on the phone for hours to claim retirement benefits. Widows and widowers with young children who just lost their spouses may struggle to claim survivor benefits.

These cuts will hit people with disabilities hardest. Already, 30,000 Americans a year are dying while waiting for a hearing on Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, which can take months or even years. These cuts are likely to make that wait even longer. Any one of us could get hit by a car tomorrow and need those benefits as soon as possible—not years from now.

Degraded customer service isn't our only concern. Due to the enormous loss of institutional knowledge and expertise from recent staff departures and more to come, Social Security may experience catastrophic system failures.

Social Security's infrastructure is antiquated and complex. For example, key systems use COBOL, a programming language developed in the 1950s and 1960s, with which many computer engineers are unfamiliar. If Social Security's computer systems experience an outage, which has happened twice in recent years, the agency may lack the expertise to resolve it.

Social Security has never missed a payment in its nearly 90 years. Unless Congress acts soon, that could change in the near future. This is not a partisan issue. Democratic, Republican and independent voters all greatly value and need Social Security. In red states and blue states alike, Americans want access to their hard-earned benefits. The Trump administration's own acting Social Security commissioner has stated publicly that the DOGE-led cuts could "break things," and that the recent changes are being effectuated by "outsiders who are unfamiliar with nuances of SSA programs." The Social Security commissioner from President Trump's first term has also raised concerns, as have a growing array of Social Security experts across the political spectrum.

We urge Republicans and Democrats in Congress to work together to protect Social Security. The time to act is now, when it is still possible for the agency to reverse course on at least some of the staff cuts and access to sensitive data and systems. If members of Congress wait any longer, they will soon find their phone lines and district offices flooded with furious constituents who can't access benefits. Service delivery delayed can turn into service delivery denied if Congress doesn't stand up and act soon to prevent a collapse of the Social Security Administration.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to end with what I have been trying to do since I started some, I think, about 8 hours ago—yeah, 8 hours ago, I began. I want to begin by doing what I said I was going to do, is not just lift my voice but lift the voice of New Jerseyans and Americans. And so here are some words.

This is one employee from New Jersey who contacted me to say that the teleservice center has received many calls from the public from New Jersey to Georgia and other States. What they all have in common is the fear of losing their livelihood as a result of identification verification, in-person visits. Seniors, disabled, and others that are economically disadvantaged need a

voice, Senator BOOKER. And the voice I hear all throughout the day from seniors are voices of fear. Please review any policy of in-person identification for the public.

A person from my State begging because they are hearing the fear of the seniors that they pledged themselves to serve.

Another Social Security employee from New Jersey contacted me and said:

I worked at Social Security for almost 19 years. I was approaching my 19 years in July. However, I took the early-out retirement because there is a lot of uncertainty within the agency.

The resignation of others also brings additional phone calls and workloads into the office. This adds additional stress and no additional bodies to handle the workloads. It also provides poor, unfair service to the public.

Here is another story from a Social Security employee in New Jersey:

I am a claims representative for our Social Security field office. The most dramatic changes I have noticed from our recent change in operations is that our appointment calendar seems to be filling up more quickly for simple post-entitlement changes that were formerly handled over the phone. This occupies appointment space for most urgent and critical issues that would warrant an office visit.

We have identified verification protocols already in place to keep identity thieves in check. To the extent that some fraudsters are still getting through requiring people to come to our office and verify their identities is obviously a less efficient solution to the problem. A better solution to enhance security is to use two-step verification systems and document fraud attempts in our technician dashboards so scammers can't just shop around for field offices to fool.

Regarding the in-person identifying policy, I believe that it is causing more harm than good. I've had claimants appearing in person frantic that they will lose their benefits because of this.

My office lost four staff members. Two are members of management. This is nothing but chaos here. I can foresee more loss and further decline and poor morale.

That is from a Social Security employee in my State describing what is going on in their office.

Another New Jersey Social Security worker:

I work in one of the smaller offices in New Jersey, and we are currently combined with another office that is undergoing renovations, which has caused the number of claimants coming into the office to double over the last few months.

Although we do have extra staff because the staff have been deployed to our location, it doesn't change the infrastructure of the building, such as the number of desks available to do in-person interviews and provide adequate waiting space for double the amount of claimants. In our office, we only have nine desks where we can interview the public safely and use safety protocols. Three of these are front windows where we can do quick changes and six of them are where we could do short interviews for benefit applications.

Right now, being that most interviews are being done over the phone, we have over 20 people interviewing at a time now. Imagine having to do these interviews in person. We can only have six to nine interviews at a time instead of 20-plus because there are

only six to nine desks available. This doesn't seem very efficient.

Maybe they should—too bad they can't call the Department of Government Efficiency, which caused the problem.

Here is another Social Security worker and their story:

Foot traffic in a field office on a daily basis is already overwhelming. The public coming in randomly to show their identity would be a disadvantage for the elderly, people with vision issues, disabled, and someone with no car.

This really hits home with me. My older brother lost his right leg to diabetes, is legally blind, unable to drive. He called me concerned about this, knowing there is no way he can get to his field office and cannot afford to lose his retirement. I am hoping this is reconsidered.

Social Security is not a program; it is a promise. We owe it to seniors and working people who paid into Social Security their whole lives to make good on the promise of a secure retirement, not to attack Social Security, to drive them to fear and worry, and when they call for help, to put them on hold for hours or drive them to offices that may be closing or are overcrowded or are unable to help our elders.

Does this sound like America at its best? Does this sound like America being made great again? This is outrageous. These are our elders. They deserve dignity, respect, and they deserve their Social Security.

I am going to move on to the next item, but I want to reiterate again that I am determined to stand here as long as I physically can. We are 8 hours into it. Dozens and dozens of people—I read their stories. As I have gone around the country and I have gone around my State, there is this growing anger and rage and fear. There is chaos. There is confusion.

They read the newspapers and see that programs are helping them when an unexpected disease or cancer or crisis hits them, and they see that a bunch of folks are trying to figure out how to cut \$880 billion from things like Medicaid.

The stories got me a little emotional just because I am hearing about so many people who—not to their fault, not to their problem—are hit by a crisis, a challenge, an accident at work are now sitting back and are going to see what we do.

People have told us that their whole delicate, fragile world works because they have a transportation program that could be on the blocks of cuts in Medicaid or their home healthcare worker or their medications.

Even while these big issues are being discussed, we are seeing, as we have been documenting here, again, from Republicans and Democrats, how the administration is already taking steps to roll back programs, to seize funding that people have used to access the ACA or to lower their prescription drug costs or that is funding the research that we are competing with China on through the NIH. Republicans and

Democrats, we have read already, have been saying: Hey, wait a minute, you shouldn't cut things that produce money for your country in the long term.

But now here is something that I want to get into, which is education in our Nation. I believe that genius is equally distributed in the United States. There are as many geniuses being born in the wealthiest parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania as are being born in the lowest incomes.

In a global knowledge-based economy, the most valuable natural resource any nation has is the genius of its children. One genius—one Einstein, one Madame Curie—one genius could change humanity forever.

I hear the stories about China graduating more people in STEM than we have total graduates in our entire country. It is a global competition. If we are to be this Nation that ANDY KIM talked about where every generation has the right as an American to expect that the next generation will do better, not worse, so much of this revolves around what we all know: how important education is to a democracy especially—the best ideas, the best innovations, the best artists, innovators, entrepreneurs, scientists, doctors, teachers. We need to invest in the best pipeline possible.

But now, not with Congress, which established the Department of Education, but by Executive fiat undermining separation of powers, the administration wants to dismantle, defund, destroy the Department of Education, scatter its responsibilities across Agencies that themselves are going through massive personnel cuts and are not equipped to handle it.

This is ultimately about whether or not we as a nation believe that every child deserves an education. We should organize ourselves to meet that calling. Our Nation's children are that precious resource. One of the most noble professions are people that teach our children.

So let's go right into it. At the signing ceremony to commemorate the establishment of the Department of Education, President Jimmy Carter said:

Today's signing fulfills a longstanding personal commitment on my part. My first public office was as a county school board member. As a state senator and governor, I devoted much of my time to education issues. I remain convinced education is one of the most noblest enterprises a person or society can undertake.

Pastor Carter also said that the Department of Education was created because education is so important to our Nation's future that it must have a robust level of national support.

Here is a letter I really wanted to read. I am a member of a Baptist church with the great Pastor Jefferson, but I actually studied Torah. In my Torah study with Rabbi Davidson, when I heard about all these cuts in the Department of Education, he wanted me to hear from a great rebbe,

Rebbe Menachem Schneerson, a Lubavitch rebbe who in 1979 wrote a letter not in support of religious schools but wrote a letter in support of public education, in support of the creation of a special Department of Education.

He wrote this letter in 1979. I was so moved by it—thank you, Rabbi Davidson—I want to read it here.

This is the rebbe:

I am certain that you will agree that the state of education in this country, as many others, leaves much to be desired;—

He was not happy—

that the status quo (as reflected in juvenile delinquency, [et cetera]) is far from satisfactory, and, what is worse, has been steadily eroding; and that some determined nationwide effort is called for to upgrade the quality of public education in this resourceful country.

I trust you will agree that such an enormous effort, which is surely in the highest national interest, can come only from the Federal government with the fullest cooperation of State, County and City.

In my view, a separate, adequately funded Cabinet-level Department of Education, subject to legislative safeguards to ensure that the traditional primacy of States and localities in education affairs would not be jeopardized, could well meet the challenge.

The main reasons why I support said proposal are as follows:

1. The creation of a distinct Cabinet-level Department of Education would have a salutary impact on all who are involved in education, particularly parents, teachers, and students. The very innovation of upgrading the status of Education from that of an adjunct to, or division of, another national agency, would pointedly underscore its proper place among the Nation's priorities.

Look how prescient the rebbe was and what he might say if he was alive today.

2. The workshops of child education are the school and the home. For various reasons, which need not be discussed—

“I am worried about the home,” he basically says. Too much of school is left to the streets.

Insofar as the street is concerned there is very little we can do as things now stand. More can be done, and needs to be done. . . . But in the final analysis it is the public school where the greatest improvement can and must be achieved.

3. Among the factors that lie at the roots of shortcomings of public education, two—in my opinion—command primary attention: One has to do with the general curriculum, which should place much greater emphasis on character building and moral and ethical values. The other has to do with the quality of teaching—by qualified, dedicated and motivating teachers. The latter point requires the upgrading of teachers' salaries on par with comparable professions in other fields of science and relieving them, as far as possible, of other frustrations and stresses.

I want to do a side note here. I am a big believer that we should slash public school professionals' tax rates. We need the best minds coming into the profession. Why not as a country say: If you are going to take a job as a teacher—which, unfortunately, pays too low in our country—let's do that instead of, again, giving these massive tax cuts disproportionately to the wealthiest in our country.

The upgrading of the Nation's educational system will, of course, require considerable Federal [investment]. But this is one area where spending has built-in returns, not only in the long term, but also in . . . immediate gains in terms of diminishing expenditures in the penal system, crime prevention, reduction in vandalism, drug abuse. . . . In the longer term, it would also bring savings in expenditure on health and welfare, and—one may venture to say—even in the defense budget, since a morally healthy, strong and united nation is in itself a strong deterrent against any enemy.

5. The creation of a separate Cabinet-level Department of Education, as I understand it, has been conceived not for the purpose of merely improving administrative efficiency, nor merely as coordinator of existing programs, or for similar technical reasons. The main purpose is to breathe the new life into the whole educational system of this Nation, and to involve the whole Nation, through its Federal government, in this massive and concerted effort. As such—I am convinced—[a national Department of Education, Cabinet-level] deserves everybody's support.

Thank you, rebbe.

Unfortunately, this administration has not listened to the rebbes.

What does the Department of Education do, and how is this administration attacking it? Let me read you an excerpt.

The New York Times: “Can Trump Really Abolish the Department of Education?” March 20:

President Trump signed an executive order on Thursday that directs the federal Department of Education to come up with a plan for its own demise. Only Congress can abolish a Cabinet-level agency, and it is not clear whether Mr. Trump has the votes in Congress to do so.

I will tell you, in the Senate, if he needs 60 votes, he doesn't.

But he has already begun to dismantle the department, firing about half of its staff, gutting its respected education-research arm, and vastly narrowing the focus of its civil rights division, which works to protect students from discrimination.

Mr. Trump's long history of attacking the Department of Education represents a revival of a Reagan-era Republican talking point. It has unified Democrats in fiery opposition.

Yeah.

But is shuttering the department possible? And if not, how has Trump begun to use the agency to achieve his policy goals?

What does the department do?

Founded in 1979, its main job is distributing money to college students through grants and loans. It also sends federal money to K-12 schools, targeted toward low-income and disabled students, and enforces anti-discrimination laws.

The money for schools has been set aside by Congress and is unlikely to be affected by Mr. Trump's executive order.

I don't agree with the New York Times because time and time again, the money set aside by Congress is being clawed back by the President against the people that the Constitution of the United States of America says has spending power.

Those federal dollars account for only about 10 percent of K-12 school funding nationwide. While Mr. Trump has said he wants to return power over education to the states, states and school districts already control

K-12 education, which is mostly paid for with state and local tax dollars. The federal department does not control learning standards or reading lists.

The agency does play a big role in funding and disseminating research on education, but those efforts have been significantly scaled back by the Trump administration.

It also administers tests to track whether American students are learning and how they compare with their peers in other states and countries.

God forbid we measure people's performances.

It is unclear whether those tests will continue to be delivered given the drastic reductions in the staff and funding necessary to manage them.

Still, closing the department would not likely have much of an immediate effect on how schools and colleges operate. The Trump administration has discussed tapping the Treasury Department to disburse student loans and grants, for instance, and Health and Human Services to administer funding for students with disabilities. . . . Any effort to fully eliminate the department would have to go through Congress. Republican members would mostly hear opposition from superintendents, college presidents, and other education leaders in their school districts; schools in Republican regions rely on federal aid from the agency, just as schools in Democratic regions do.

"They are going to run into opposition," says Jon Valant, an education expert at the Brookings Institution. "They have a laser-thin majority and a filibuster to confront in the Senate."

Even if congressional Republicans stuck together . . . Dr. Valant predicts their constituents would protest, given the department's role in distributing money in programs like Pell grants, which pay for college tuition, and I.D.E.A., which provides support to students with disabilities.

"It's a very hard sell. . . . I am . . . skeptical."

Efforts to eliminate the Department threaten the enforcement of critical laws. There is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which has supported school districts since 1965 in low-income areas; the Individuals with Disabilities Act, which ensures 7.5 million students with disabilities receive an education; the Higher Education Act, which helps more students afford college; and title IX protections to guard against sex discrimination. This doesn't just hurt our country, but undermining those resources for our students hurts generations to come.

I ask unanimous consent that the New York Times article entitled "Trump Firings Gut Education Civil Rights Division" be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Mar. 13, 2025]

TRUMP FIRINGS GUT EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT'S CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION
(By Michael C. Bender and Rachel Nostrant)

Decades ago, Congress guaranteed all students an equal opportunity to an education. But now the office created to enforce that promise has been decimated.

The Education Department's Office for Civil Rights was slashed in half on Tuesday as part of President Trump's aggressive push to dismantle the agency, which he has called

a "con job." The firings eliminated the entire investigative staff in seven of the office's 12 regional branches, including in Boston, Cleveland, Dallas and San Francisco, and left thousands of pending cases in limbo.

The layoffs struck every corner of the department, which manages federal loans for college, tracks student achievement and supports programs for students with disabilities.

But education policy experts and student advocates were particularly distressed about the gutting of the civil rights office, which fielded more than 22,600 complaints from parents and students last year, an increase of more than 200 percent from five years earlier.

Some voiced particular concern about what could happen to students with special needs, whose access to education is often left to the federal government to enforce. Many questioned how the Trump administration would be able to handle the office's case load moving forward—or if it would at all.

"The move to gut this office and leave only a shell means the federal government has turned its back on civil rights in schools," said Catherine E. Lhamon, who led the office as assistant secretary for civil rights in both the Obama and Biden administrations. "I am scared for my kids and I am scared for every mother with kids in school."

The Office for Civil Rights, established by Congress, opened along with the rest of the Education Department in 1980. One of the office's first leaders was Clarence Thomas, now a Supreme Court justice. It is relatively inexpensive compared with other agency programs, with a cost of about \$140 million in the department's \$80 billion discretionary budget.

The majority of civil rights complaints typically involve students with disabilities, followed by allegations of racial and sex-based discrimination. Many of the disability cases involve complaints that schools are failing to provide accommodations for students or that schools are separating disabled students from their peers in violation of federal law.

Mr. Trump and the education secretary, Linda McMahon, have maintained that staffing cuts at the department will not disrupt services for the 50 million pupils in elementary and secondary schools or 20 million college students.

But the only preparation the Trump administration announced before the layoffs was that the department's Washington-based headquarters would be closed on Wednesday as a security precaution.

"We'll see how it all works out," Mr. Trump said of the layoffs while speaking to reporters at the White House.

Madi Biedermann, the Education Department's deputy assistant for communications, said changes were underway in the civil rights office to process cases and praised the remaining staff members for their commitment and years of experience.

"We are confident that the dedicated staff of O.C.R. will deliver on its statutory responsibilities," she said.

One civil rights investigator wept in an interview on Wednesday as she spoke about the abrupt firings and what they would mean for parents fighting for fairness for their children.

This investigator, who requested anonymity out of fear of retribution, had talked to parents on Tuesday morning about a possible resolution to a yearslong push to have their disabled son's needs met at school.

In the afternoon, the investigator prepared a new case about a school retaliating against a Black student who had complained about racial slurs from classmates and reviewed an offer from another school to resolve a complaint from a student whose wheelchair had

been repeatedly stuck—and occasionally tipped over—from crumbling walkways on campus.

In the evening, the investigator was fired. With work access cut off, there was no way to follow up with any of the parents she had spoken with that day, or to contact the witnesses she was scheduled to interview on Wednesday about a college student's discrimination complaint.

"I was really trying to help, and now I can't even talk to them, and I'm so sorry," the investigator said. "I would never treat anyone like this. I would never just not show up or stop talking to someone, but I have no way to reschedule or let them know what's going on."

Disability rights advocates said that any impediment to the department's ability to enforce civil rights laws would cause widespread harm to the nation's education system.

Zoe Gross, the director of advocacy for the Autism Self Advocacy Network, said that she was particularly concerned about what might happen to the office's data collection efforts, which have been used to spot potential red flags and identify trends.

For example, when some states reported zero instances of disabled students who had been restrained or separated from their peers, O.C.R. investigated and found that cases were not being reported because school officials had misinterpreted rules for disabled students. The federal government then intervened.

"All of these kinds of things you need the department to do and help with," Ms. Gross said. "And without the Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights, we're going to see basically states left on their own to navigate that."

Many of the office's past cases have served as catalysts for broader change.

During the Obama administration, the office's investigations into sexual assault and harassment identified more than 100 colleges and universities that were inadequately reporting and responding to allegations.

As a result, many schools adopted internal enforcement policies that have made it easier for students who have been sexually assaulted to receive large damage awards. These investigations have also been routinely referred to as validation for the collegiate #MeToo movement.

Sex-based cases also include harassment involving gender identity, an issue that fueled Mr. Trump's campaign last year and motivated executive orders early in his administration aimed at preventing schools from recognizing transgender identities, barring transgender girls and women from competing on girls' and women's sports teams and terminating programs that promote "gender ideology."

Restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic led to their own genre of discrimination complaints as schools closed, struggled to carry out online learning and then were slow to reopen.

Department officials said they still intend to pursue civil rights complaints and have discussed relying more on mediations as a way to quicken the pace of investigations, as well as other available legal tools to rapidly resolve cases.

The office had already moved to align with Mr. Trump's priorities. It paused ongoing investigations into complaints of schools banning books and dismissed 11 pending cases involving schools that had removed books from their libraries. The cases primarily delved into issues of gender and racial identity.

Under the Biden administration, the office vigorously investigated complaints of racial discrimination amid the so-called racial

reckoning in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd. Some complaints reflected the debate about schools' roles in addressing systemic racism or charged that certain programming was exclusionary of non-minorities. Several longstanding diversity and inclusion efforts—which Mr. Trump has now ordered “illegal” and “harmful”—came under a microscope.

The civil rights office has also seen a rise in allegations of antisemitism, particularly on college campuses, and other religious-based discrimination. The Trump administration has supported those investigations, which they have used to strip federal funding from one university and threaten dozens more with similar consequences.

Before firing 1,315 employees on Tuesday, the Trump administration had already encouraged 572 workers to quit or retire early and had let go 63 employees who did not have union protections.

Taken together, 47 percent of the department's work force had been eliminated in the first 50 days of Mr. Trump's return to the White House.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that “How Education Department Cuts Could Hurt Low-Income and Rural Schools in Particular,” an article of March 21, 2025, be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Mar. 21, 2025]

HOW THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CUTS
COULD HURT LOW-INCOME AND RURAL SCHOOLS
(By Jonaki Mehta)

President Trump's efforts to shutter the U.S. Department of Education are in full swing.

On Thursday, he signed an executive action instructing U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education,” and to do so “to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law.”

Before that, the department had already announced it was shrinking its workforce by nearly half, with cuts to all divisions.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump signed an executive action to begin dismantling the U.S. Department of Education.

Meanwhile, the administration has promised that “formula funding” for schools, which is protected by law, would be preserved. That includes flagship programs like Title I for high-poverty schools, and the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), which sends money to rural and low-income schools.

But nearly all the statisticians and data experts who work in the office responsible for determining whether schools qualify for that money will soon be out of jobs, making it unclear how such grants would remain intact.

At the start of the year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) employed more than 100 people. On Friday, all but three employees will be placed on administrative leave, and eventually laid off. That's according to multiple NCES employees, who asked that their names not be used because they feared retaliation for speaking out. An internal email obtained by NPR also confirmed how many staff would remain.

“That will have an absolutely devastating impact,” says Matthew Gardner Kelly, who studies the country's K-12 funding systems at the University of Washington. Since 1867, NCES has been a central, reliable source of information that helps educators, researchers and the public understand the state of education in the United States.

Gardner Kelly says the loss of NCES staff will hit low-income schools especially hard.

“It's not just that loss of information, it's what will happen to a school district's budget in the absence of funds that can't be allocated without the necessary staff at NCES.”

NPR reached out to the Department of Education for comment and did not hear back.

The federal government only provides a fraction of the money that goes to schools—states and local governments are responsible for the lion's share of that funding. But the federal government plays an outside role in helping high-needs schools get the money they need to stay afloat.

Congress established Title I to provide money to K-12 schools in low-income communities. In the current fiscal year, the Department of Education set aside more than \$18.38 billion for Title I. Nearly 90% of U.S. school districts benefit from the program, which has historically enjoyed bipartisan support among lawmakers.

The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) awards money to low-income and rural school districts. More than a quarter of the country's public schools are in rural areas. And while REAP is a fraction of the size of Title I—\$215 million for the current year—Amy Price Azano of Virginia Tech's Center for Rural Education says those dollars stretch much further in rural communities.

“We work with school districts that have 10 people in a graduating class. So when you're talking about enough money to get the one student who needed a paraprofessional to walk across that stage,” a little bit goes a long way.

These federal grants can pay for things like school staff salaries, supplies, technology, tutoring programs and a range of basic services that low-income schools may not otherwise be able to afford.

NCES employees told NPR that the cuts to the Education Department likely won't impact REAP or Title I grants for the 2025-26 school year, but the fate of these grants beyond that seems incredibly uncertain.

For grants that go to rural schools through the REAP program, NCES plays a direct role in creating the relevant data and providing assistance to local school leaders.

But by the end of the day on Friday, all but three NCES staffers will be locked out of their computers and on administrative leave.

“The key issue is that—as things stand now—the data needed to drive the next round of Title I, and grants to rural schools, and grants to other programs, isn't going to happen as a result of the cuts to NCES staff and contracts,” said one former NCES employee.

Several employees told NPR that, after the layoffs, it is unlikely the REAP program will be able to get money to schools for the 2026-27 school year.

The same goes for Title I, with an added challenge: The Trump administration is poised to shrink the ranks of the Census Bureau. A reduction in its staff could further complicate the distribution of Title I funding.

Thursday's executive action lays out the Trump administration's goal of returning “authority over education to the States and local communities.”

But one of the key benefits of grants like Title I and REAP is that while the federal government, including NCES, determines which school districts are eligible, it is ultimately up to local leaders to decide how best to use that money.

NCES staff also provide expertise, oversight and guidance to ensure those leaders have what they need to plan budgets effectively for each school year.

William Sonnenberg, who is now retired, spent nearly five decades working on Title I for NCES until 2022.

“I don't think it's an exaggeration to say in a given year, I would get thousands of calls from local superintendents or other kinds of people at the school district or at the state level in Title I offices, asking for guidance,” he says.

One NCES employee said, “Everyone acknowledges three people cannot come anywhere close to fulfilling statutory obligations.”

Without data oversight and guidance from NCES, Sonnenberg worries federal grant money may not reach the low-income students who need it most.

Rural education expert Amy Price Azano says, while rural schools are used to having fewer resources, the loss of REAP funds will strain them even more.

“They're doing more with less anyway. And so the risk now is that they will have to be even more resilient. They will have to do even more with even less.”

Mr. BOOKER. Again, rural communities are really taking a hit.

If I can give disability rights testimonials: Gutting the Department of Education will be devastating for students with disabilities. Right now, the Department of Education—the Individuals with Disabilities Act guarantees more than 7 million students in America the right to a free, appropriate public education. It ensures that—it provides services like speech therapies, counseling, and personalized learning plans. Without Federal oversight, these protections could disappear; schools could delay evaluations, cut corners, or deny support altogether for parents.

Consider Kathryn, a resident of Westwood, NJ, right by Harrington Park, where I grew up. Kathryn has 7-year-old twin boys who receive special services. They currently attend an out-of-school-district specialized program but are very much a part of the Westwood Regional School District and may even one day transition back into the school.

In her words:

The Department of Education plays a critical role in enforcing the IDEA and ensuring that students with disabilities receive the accommodations and support they need to succeed. Without this oversight, many students risk losing essential services, widening existing gaps and disparities, and they will face greater barriers to academic success and reaching their highest potential.

This is not a partisan issue; it is a matter of assuring that all students, regardless of ability, have equal access to education.

Her story is one of thousands of parents, educators, and advocates across the country who are standing up for children's rights to an equitable education. Kathryn's family is for her boys, and every child deserves a fair shot at success. Their fight for inclusive education is essential.

Here is Ashley from Wayne, NJ, who knows firsthand how important the Department of Education's funding is. Her daughter, who is legally blind, relies on Bookshare—an online learning tool—that provides successful materials to students with print disabilities

at no cost to schools or families. Without it, her daughter would be left behind.

As Ashley put it:

This is a service she absolutely needs in order to access information that regularly sighted people do not even have to think about. Cutting programs like this isn't just irresponsible; it would be cruel.

Kimberly from Dumont, NJ, the mother of twin boys with nonverbal level 3 autism:

They attend an amazing school in Nutley because of IDEA. Without it, their future would be uncertain.

In her own words, she says:

It was not long ago that kids like them would have had to have been institutionalized. Now they are able to have a beautiful life and go to school. I am terrified of the future if IDEA is eliminated. I am begging you. Please consider families like mine.

Kimberly, I see you.

Michelle from New Jersey shares this fear. Her daughter, who has neurofibromatosis, who is 1—excuse me—and has apraxia, depends on in-class support to succeed. She knows firsthand how essential the Department of Education is in protecting students with disabilities.

These are her words:

Gutting, weakening, and ultimately closing the Department of Education is disastrous and dangerous for the disabled students who depend upon it.

She reminds us that education is a civil right and that laws like the IDEA and section 504 ensure that students with disabilities receive the support they need to succeed.

Alana from my State is deeply concerned about her 20-year-old son, who depends on the protections of section 504 to have a fair shot at the future. Her 10-year-old child with autism relies on these protections every single day. She is asking for help because, as she put it, "Section 504 and its rules are very important to the disability community. We need your help to save it."

Roger, who is a grandfather from New Jersey, is also pleading for action. His granddaughter has relied on a 504 plan since the seventh grade and will continue to need it as she applies to college. He raises the essential question: Which programs are directly helping students? The answer is clear: Laws like IDEA, IEP, and section 504. They are not luxuries; they are lifelines.

Again, this is not about politics, and, as we see from various writings, people from both sides of the aisle are worried and concerned.

I ask unanimous consent that this article from one of the publications in my State—"What happens to special education programs in New Jersey if Trump shuts down the Department of Education?" by Gene Myers—be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Mar. 21, 2025]

WHAT HAPPENS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN NJ IF TRUMP SHUTS DOWN THE DEPT. OF ED?

(By Gene Myers)

President Donald Trump's drive to shut down the U.S. Education Department could reverberate through one community in New Jersey like few others: students and families who rely on special education programs for children with disabilities.

While the federal department has limited involvement in funding and standards for the general education population, it administers \$15 billion a year that helps pay for classes, therapies and other resources for special education. It's also the chief enforcer of laws that guarantee students with disabilities the right to a public education tailored to their needs.

The Trump administration has promised to preserve those functions in other parts of the government. But in New Jersey, advocates have raised alarms about shifting back to an era when state and local government often shortchanged the education of their most vulnerable students.

"Families are terrified. Educators are worried," said Peg Kinsell, policy director at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network in Newark, which works with the disability community. "Nobody knows what's happening next, and that's a scary place to be."

Trump on Thursday signed an executive order that seeks to eliminate the DOE, two weeks after letting go about half the department's staff. The move is likely to set up another legal challenge testing the bounds of Trump's power, with critics arguing the president can't shut down the agency without approval by Congress.

Harrison Fields, White House principal deputy press secretary, said in a statement to USA TODAY that the order "will empower parents, states, and communities to take control and improve outcomes for all students." He said recent test scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exam "reveal a national crisis—our children are falling behind."

Federal funding for students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title I funding for low-income schools and federal student loan payments will remain unchanged under the order while Education Secretary Linda McMahon works on a plan to "bring these funds closer to states, localities, and more importantly, students," a White House official said.

About 7.5 million students rely on special education services in the U.S. The number has nearly doubled since the 1976-77 school year, the year after the IDEA was adopted and declared that schools had a legal responsibility to provide a "fair and appropriate" public education to students with disabilities.

New Jersey is home to one of the largest such populations in the country, according to Rutgers University's New Jersey State Public Policy Lab. Among Garden State public school students, 18%, about 240,000 in total, are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, according to the Lab.

New Jersey's proposed 2026 budget anticipates \$457.7 million in federal funding allocated to local school districts for special education services. At the local level, the money pays for staff as well as occupational and physical therapies and services required by students' individual education plans, according to the federal Education Department.

While it's still early, advocates say a sharp reduction in federal staff could weaken en-

forcement of IDEA and other disability rights laws and jeopardize funding and oversight.

Who'll enforce civil rights laws?

The Department plays a role in enforcing civil rights protections under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a 1973 law that prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs receiving federal funding. Under the legislation, schools are required to provide equal access to education through accommodations such as extended time limits for tests and accessible transportation.

Kinsell said that handing enforcement back to the states would be a dangerous step backward.

"Giving it back to the states brings us down a really dark path," she said. "Before IDEA was passed in 1975, many states simply refused to educate kids with disabilities. They segregated them, or didn't let them attend school at all."

Before the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was enacted, just one in five children with disabilities were taught in public schools, the federal DOE says on its website.

Dismantling the department would fulfill a goal long sought by the political right. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington, D.C.-based think tank, contends that education policy should be made by states and local communities, not the federal government. The federal agency adds a layer of expensive bureaucracy that doesn't directly educate students, the Foundation's Jonathan Butcher and Lindsey Burke argued in a paper last summer.

Local control would allow for more innovation and flexibility in how education is delivered, they added, arguing the DOE imposes a one-size-fits-all solution that often doesn't suit local needs.

But the National Education Association, the union that represents 3 million teachers and other educational professionals in the U.S., cautions that without the department's oversight, inequities in special education services across states could grow significantly.

States already vary in how they implement IDEA, but federal monitoring helps ensure some consistency, the Association said. Without that safeguard, some states, especially those with tight budgets, might restrict eligibility or cut services, the NEA said in a statement.

Some Republicans would like to see federal education funding turned into block grants, in which states would get a lump sum to spend as they choose. Kinsell worries that would undermine services further for disabled students.

"Right now, IDEA funds are designated for special education students," she said. "If it's block-granted, states could take that money and spend it on something else, like building a gym, instead of serving kids with disabilities."

In addition to funding and legal enforcement, the Education Department collects and monitors data on how schools serve students with disabilities, tracking issues such as disproportionate discipline and lack of inclusion. Without DOE leadership, Kinsell said, such problems could go unchecked.

Cuts could affect not just enforcement but also vital programs like technical assistance, professional development and research, she argued. "There's a lot of parts of the law beyond enforcement—training, curriculum development, research—that help states implement appropriate education," Kinsell said. "If those are gone, the whole system suffers."

Further complicating matters, Kinsell said, are proposals to split up existing federal offices. "They're talking about moving

the Office for Civil Rights to the Justice Department, disability programs to Health and Human Services, and vocational rehab to the Department of Labor," she said. "That would scatter programs that need to work together."

While no one knows what's next, Kinsell said she expects that reducing or eliminating the department will have real impacts on families.

"The state of confusion is palpable—for advocates, for families, for educators," she said. "It's like watching the floor get pulled out from under everyone who relies on these supports."

Mr. BOOKER. I want to say something about student loans too.

The Department of Education is also responsible for operating the \$1.6 trillion Federal student loan program, which benefits 42.7 million borrowers in America, and it allows students to access higher education—something that is shown unequivocally to strengthen our economy.

This administration plans to move student loan funding to the Small Business Administration—a plan that even some of my Republican colleagues in Congress have expressed serious concerns about.

Here is an article: "Republicans hesitant to stand behind Trump's plan for student loans."

Although SBA . . . managed a wealth of COVID relief programs, it normally runs a much smaller operation than [the] student debt [program].

President . . . Trump has yet to win over his own party with his push to "immediately" transfer the Education Department's massive student loan operation to another agency slated for deep staff cuts.

Trump was expected to propose moving the agency's \$1.6 trillion portfolio to the Treasury Department—a concept long-discussed on Capitol Hill and suggested in Project 2025, The Heritage Foundation's conservative policy blueprint. Instead, the president announced this month that the [SBA] would get it, surprising many lawmakers and conservatives who track the issue.

Although the SBA, which provides financial support to companies for disaster relief, training and other needs, managed a wealth of COVID relief programs, it normally runs a much smaller operation than student debt. It is also slated to lose 43 percent of its staff.

Now . . . Republicans are worried about the size of the debt and the staffing needed to manage the complex system of servicers, borrowers, and loan applications. And with about 43 million borrowers—and a record number of them starting to fall behind on their payments since the pandemic-era hiatus ended in 2023—transferring this work may be one of the most challenging hurdles for unwinding the agency President Trump has pledged to close.

"A lot of us were thinking it would go to Treasury. We are talking about the huge nature of student loans," House Education and Workforce Chair Tim Walberg said in an interview. "They have much larger staffing capabilities right now than the SBA, but the president may have something specific in mind that I'm not aware of."

Early legislation from Senator Mike Rounds . . . aimed at dismantling the Education Department also recommended the Treasury Department for the job. And at a recent House Rules Committee meeting, Walberg suggested that moving the portfolio to the SBA—which likely requires an act of Congress to complete—might not be "perma-

nent." Some Republican lawmakers have been hesitant to say the move is official.

Neither the Education Department's Federal Aid office, which manages the loan program, nor SBA have provided a timeline or detailed plans to move the portfolio. But Education Department officials skeptical of Trump's SBA plan met the week after his announcement to discuss if the Treasury Department should manage this massive portfolio instead of the SBA, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss the matter.

Some conservatives are concerned about the SBA's lack of experience with colleges and universities and the time crunch its staff will be under to learn the complex student loan system.

The plan to move the portfolio "sounds rushed, it sounds like no one has been briefed on it, and it is not clear what the purpose is," said Jason Delisle, who served on the Education Department's review group on Trump's presidential transition team.

FSA largely works with direct loans, meaning that instead of a bank lending the money, the Education Department disburses the funds directly to the institution in the student's name. Colleges and universities, however, aren't on the hook if the loan isn't repaid—the borrower is.

SBA only started working with direct loans at a massive scale in the aftermath of the pandemic.

"They're laying off 43 percent of the SBA staff at the same time [SBA is] being handed a \$1.6 trillion portfolio that is three times the size of what they have," said Michael Negron, who worked on small business and student loans for the National Economic Council during the Biden administration.

The administration has not clearly stated whether FSA workers who have expertise on the student debt system would be transferred to the SBA, which is a concern for Negron. That doesn't mean it's impossible. SBA could be a good fit, he said, but the conditions need to be right.

"There is a world where this could work," he said optimistically. He is now a fellow at Groundwork Collaborative, a leftwing think tank.

The White House did not acknowledge questions about how it would transfer.

"President Trump is doing everything he can within his executive authority to dismantle the Department of Education and return education back to the states while safeguarding critical functions for students and families," press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. The President has always said Congress has a role to play in this effort, and we expect him to help the President deliver.

You know, that sounds like a President who doesn't care about Congress, who cares about what he is trying to do. He hasn't approached this in an intelligent way, making grand statements and opinions without considering the Department you are transferring loans to might actually be incapable, with a severely diminished staff, of doing the job.

Here is an incredible article by Fareed Zakaria about what is really going on and how it affects the United States, especially relative to other nations:

There is no area in which the United States' global dominance is more total than higher education. With about 4 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of its gross domestic product, America has 72 per-

cent of the world's 25 top universities by one ranking and 64 percent by another. But this crucial U.S. competitive advantage is being undermined by the Trump administration's war on colleges. Hat tip to the New York Times's Michelle Goldberg for raising this issue as well.

"We have to honestly and aggressively attack the universities in this country. . . . The professors are the enemy," said JD Vance during a speech to the National Conservatism Conference in 2021. The administration has put those words into action. The most dramatic assault has been financial: a freezing or massive reduction in research grants and loans from the federal government. Some of these efforts are under court review, but the cumulative impact could be billions of dollars in cuts to basic research, much of it disrupting ongoing projects and programs.

High quality research in the United States has emerged in a unique ecosystem. The federal government provides much of the funding through prominent institutions such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. Private foundations and companies account for most of the rest. Professors at universities, both public and private, use these funds to conduct the research. No other country has a system that works as well. What is at risk now is what Holden Thorp, the editor in chief of the Science family of journals, calls, "the social contract that the federal government and institutions have had to enable the scientific research enterprise in America in the last 80 years."

That is what is at risk.

Take Duke University, which ranked No. 11 in total grants received from NIH last year. Of its \$1.33 billion research budget, \$863 million came from Washington, according to the [AP]. That includes funds for critical research projects on cancer and other diseases but also support[s] . . . more than 630 PhD students at the medical school. If the cuts go through, those projects and students will have to be pared back substantially. Just on Thursday, Johns Hopkins . . . announced huge layoffs, saying it would let go of more than 2,000 employees after losing \$800 million in federal grants.

One crucial mechanism to cut funding is through a massive reduction in the overhead, or indirect, costs that universities get reimbursed for by the federal government. Overhead often makes up 40 percent or 50 percent of a grant, but last month, NIH ordered that it be capped at 15 percent. [That] sounds more rational than it is. Universities divide their costs on science grants into research costs (the salaries of the professors and graduate students) and overhead (the costs of the buildings, labs, energy and utilities and administrative staff). When you are building a complex lab to conduct experiments, the structure and equipment is often far more costly than the salaries and stipends of the researchers. Michigan State University has declared that these cuts could make it stop construction of a \$330 million research building for cancer, cardiovascular disease and neuroscience studies.

Government funding plays a unique role [in America]. It often supports basic research, the kind that companies have less incentive to do, and its results cannot be hoarded by any one company but rather are provided free to the entire scientific and technological community so that all can use it to experiment and innovate.

It is an American system that has reaped billions and billions of dollars in rewards to our economy.

The mapping of the human genome cost less than \$3 billion and took 13 years. Because it was government-funded, one of its

key requirements was that the research should be made publicly available for all within 24 hours of being generated.

The other assault on the universities is a strange new attack on free speech.

Fareed writes:

It began from a principled critique that bureaucracies, universities and elites had all become too woke. But the government's response to this problem has been Orwellian, searching through these institutions for any mentions of the words "diversity" or "identity" or "inclusion" and then shutting down those programs without any review. Worse, it now punishes universities for having on their campuses people who might espouse certain views on topics like Israel and Palestine—and now is punishing the protesters themselves. I have long argued that universities have a huge problem: They have far too little intellectual and ideological diversity—which is the most important kind of diversity on a campus. But the way you fix that is not to restrict radical left-wing speech but to add voices and views from other parts of the spectrum. The answer to censorship by the left is not censorship by the right.

The fury with which the Trump administration has turned on academia resembles nothing so much as the early days of the Cultural Revolution, when an increasingly paranoid Mao Zedong smashed China's established universities, a madness that took generations [in China] to remedy. Meanwhile, in Beijing last week, the Chinese government announced its intention to massively increase its funding for research and technology so that it could lead the world in science in the 21st century. So, as America appears to be copying the worst aspects of China's recent history, China is copying the best aspects of America's, striving to take the edge [away from] . . . the United States [as though we are going] through [our] . . . own cultural revolution.

Learn from the fascists in China. Fareed's article is over. This is me now.

Learn from the fascists in China and don't do what the Chinese did. What America has done to lead humanity in the sciences, in innovation, in research, in breakthroughs, in science—we are the global model. And one administration, in 71 days, has our best universities cutting the number of Ph.D. students they bring in, cutting the research that they are doing, cutting the planned development of research buildings. This is insanity, insanity.

We are America. Why is the President of the United States attacking the science and the research at the top universities on planet Earth, bullying them, undermining them?

I have had universities from my State. I have had universities from my neighboring State—not Connecticut, New York. And I have had my college, Stanford, come to see me—top researchers. The academic community—not the political community, not the history majors, not the political scientists, not the literature students, not the Af-Am departments—the scientists of America have been coming to the Senate to say: What the heck? What is going on? How could you take America's edge, America's advantage, America's strength, America's brilliance and

undercut it in 71 days of your administration?

We are killing the golden goose. Why? Because we have a President who is taking money that we already approved—the article I branch of government—and claiming that he could claw it back, all on some trumped-up charge that these institutions are too woke. The solution to that is not to cut science funding.

This should make people mad. But more importantly, it should make people stand up and not be bystanders and wait until we lose our edge because our adversaries globally are smiling as we destroy our institutions, from Duke to Rutgers, to the University of Michigan, to Berkeley, to Stanford.

This is madness. This is insanity—and one of a dozen reasons why we are going through this, a dozen reasons why I am standing here, that we should not be doing things normally. If we are complicit in what Trump is doing—I am hearing it not from political people but from scientists who show up in my office from Cornell, medical researchers who show up in my office from our research hospitals in New Jersey and are saying—they are not political. They are just saying: What the heck? You are undermining the research of today that will affect the breakthroughs 5 years from now, 10 years from now.

What is China doing while we are doing this? They are investing in record numbers, record levels. The country of Tiananmen Square, cracking down on college students, is now trying to act like America, while America is acting more like them because our President is violating the separation of powers, taking away the money we approved. And we are letting it happen by doing things normally here and not holding one hearing.

Here is another example of what Fareed was talking about. It is an article entitled: "Graduate student admissions paused and cut back as universities react to Trump orders on research." Again, this is not from a political magazine. It is not from the New York Times or the Washington Post or the Wall Street Journal. This is from STAT News. When did science become political?

Acceptances for biomedical graduate students and postdoctoral scholars are being cut back at some universities and medical centers across the country as many grapple with the potential impact of the Trump administration's order to cut National Institutes of Health research funding.

That paragraph alone should have people—all in this Chamber—upset. Let's just give European universities, Australian universities, Canadian universities, Chinese universities a leg up because we are going to cut the number of graduate students and postdoctoral students. The geniuses in our country will have less opportunity.

The cuts come even as the proposed reductions to funding for overhead expenses, set to start Feb. 10, were temporarily halted last

week by a federal judge, at least until a court hearing this Friday. Universities appear to be exercising caution, with some freezing positions and not taking new applications, or accepting fewer students than normal, according to interviews, public announcements, and internal emails obtained by STAT. The abrupt narrowing of training opportunities is leaving many future researchers at the start of their scientific journey in limbo.

The academic calendar runs to the rhythm of its own seasons; right now is typically the time of year when offer letters for Ph.D. programs and postdoc positions in labs start hitting inboxes. Universities and academic medical centers were in the thick of that process when the NIH—

Under President Donald Trump—policy about overhead costs, known as indirect costs, landed.

"This couldn't be worse timing for doing this," said Waverly Ding, an associate professor at the University of Maryland who studies the biomedical sciences workforce. "It's creating a jolt in the market that is going to be disabling for labs, especially the smaller ones, because they won't have the human capital to do their science. It's also going to create chaos for Ph.D.s. It's going to be a cascading kind of chain effect through the entire ecosystem."

I know we don't read science—actually, we have a few doctors in here that do—but look at the alarm that they are sounding that this is not normal.

The slowdown is happening at some universities and not at others; some students may be unaware of the issue as they anxiously await acceptance letters without fully understanding the role national politics is playing in those decisions. Some faculty are grappling with admissions that are paused and then unpaused, while others say they are receiving little information or guidance from leadership.

At the University of Southern California—And as a former Stanford football player, it is hard for me to talk about USC. I had to jab them, Senator MURPHY.

At the University of Southern California, faculty in some departments were told last week to pause admissions, and not formalize offers to students—even those who had visited and been given verbal acceptances. "The awkward part is that we already told these applicants that they were provisionally accepted and invited them to an in-person recruitment day; many have already purchased flight + hotel reservations"—

I mean, that is just cruel—one professor said in a faculty discussion list-serve observed by STAT.

I know Senator MURPHY hangs out in faculty discussion list-serves.

That pause on admissions, in psychology, was lifted this week, STAT was told.

Jennifer Unger, a professor who runs a doctoral program in health behavior research in the department of population and public health sciences at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, said Wednesday she was still not able to admit the six graduate students her department had accepted after a visit day on Feb. 3.

"We had just flown them out, we told them we love you, we want to admit you, and then everything just stopped," Unger said. "On the day Trump announced they were cutting indirect costs . . . USC paused all Ph.D. admissions."

"I just don't know what to tell them," Unger said of the students. "Some of them

have other offers and will likely go somewhere else. We've probably lost them."

Despite USC's "unpausing" of admissions in many departments, Unger said Wednesday she was still not able to admit students. She hoped her portal to admit students would open soon, but said the disruption was coming at a time when her field, public health, was already reeling from the actions of the Trump administration, something affecting potential graduate students as well.

"It's very stressful for them, this is a major life decision," she said, adding they were already worried about their futures. "They were asking, 'Do you think we'll be able to get a job in this environment? Do you think we'll get grants?'"

The dean of the Graduate School at USC told STAT late Friday that the university briefly paused Ph.D. admissions to "assess the uncertainties around federal funding," but that the admissions process was now open.

Some schools were continuing to accept students or had accepted graduate students before the recent turmoil and said those offers are intact.

"We have no knowledge of any disruptions to graduate student admissions in the science fields . . ." Rachel Zaentz, senior director of communications [said].

In some cases, the pauses to hiring and admissions were implemented ahead of the NIH policy change—evidence of how quickly the Trump administration's threats to withhold federal research dollars over diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are shifting the financial footings of universities.

On Feb. 6, faculty at Vanderbilt University were instructed to reduce graduate admissions by half across the board, according to an email obtained by STAT.

Reduce graduate admissions by half.

On the same day, faculty at the University of Washington School of Public Health received an email to pause offers to doctoral students as well as offers of financial support to graduate students. Faculty hiring was also frozen, the email said. This Tuesday, the public health school sent out another email informing the community that some faculty hiring and Ph.D. student offers would continue, but at a greatly diminished level.

The school is also planning to take more "cost containment measures," including hiring freezes and reappointment freezes . . . through the end of the academic year due to the volatility caused by the Trump administration. Existing offers will be honored, wrote Hilary Godwin, dean of UW's school of public health.

Marion Pepper, chair of UW's immunology department, said she was instructed by university leadership to keep her program's next graduate cohort smaller than the usual five to nine students admitted each year. That's easier said than done, because the proportion of students who accept offers of admission varies year-to-year. Pepper told STAT that while she expects the incoming class to be slightly smaller than normal, she has spoken with program heads at UW and elsewhere who are reducing class sizes by half or more.

"I know for other programs, they're feeling very bleak about how they're going to keep labs running without funding or students," Pepper said. "It's pretty overwhelming."

Medical schools are hit hard. Medical research is hit hard.

It's unclear how many other universities are taking similar preemptive belt-tightening measures, but schools of public health and medical schools are particularly vulnerable, because they tend to have many faculty, postdocs, and graduate students supported by grants.

Boston University School of Public Health has also ordered an across-the-board hiring freeze on all new faculty and staff positions—including student workers and postdocs. In a campus-wide announcement, Dean ad interim Michael Stein said the move was being made due to "the uncertainty of the moment." A spokesperson for the school told STAT that graduate admissions are unaffected by the freeze.

Unger said USC had cut funding for some [teaching assistants] in her department earlier this year before the new executive orders, which reduced the number of graduate students her program could accept from 10 to 6.

On Feb. 11, Columbia University's medical school faculty were told that the school was putting a temporary pause on hiring as well as other activities like travel and procuring equipment, according to an email obtained by the Columbia student newspaper, the Columbia Spectator. A spokesperson for Columbia declined to comment on the pause.

In other cases, schools may accept fewer graduate students than they had planned, not because of an overt directive from university leaders, but because faculty feel unsure about future funding, given the Trump administration's intent to cut billions of dollars in overhead funding.

At the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 25% fewer graduate students will be admitted this year—

Twenty-five percent fewer—

based on a survey of faculty members taking new students, said Mark Peifer, a professor of cell biology there. This means the school will admit about 75 students across the biomedical sciences. He noted the numbers of graduate students vary each year so the decline was not unprecedented.

And the numbers continue to go down.

In an interview with STAT, Robert Ferris, the director of UNC's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, said that hiring freezes, fewer Ph.D. student offers, and other similar cost containment measures are being considered as the center is eyeing the same financially turbulent waters as other research institutions. "Every one of those things is on the table, unfortunately," Ferris said. "There's so much uncertainty. Can we hire this faculty member? Can we purchase this equipment?"

They just don't know exactly what or how many measures the center may have to take, he said, as there are simply still too many unknowns—for instance, the outcome of the NIH indirect rate cut policy is still up in the air. "Not knowing how it's going to shake out," he said, "it just freezes everybody into inaction."

Adding to the uncertainty is disruptions to key parts of the NIH approval process for proposed research grants. Although some meetings of study sections—in which grant applications are reviewed—resumed at the start of the month, meetings of advisory councils have not. Each of the 27 institutes of the NIH has its own advisory council, which meets three times a year to issue final funding recommendations on new research projects. None of these councils—

None—

has met since the Jan. 22 communications freeze was ordered across all federal health agencies.

A law called the Federal Advisory Committee Act requires that advisory councils post meeting details in the Federal Register 15 days prior to their scheduled date. But because submissions to the Federal Register have been put on hold indefinitely, these meetings can't take place. And without these meetings, no new grants can be funded.

According to one NIH employee, at least one NIH meeting scheduled for this Friday to allow an institute director to provide updates that could proceed because it had been posted to the Federal Register was nonetheless canceled Wednesday. This was because the meeting specified it would include a session open to the public—but because a ban remains in place on any public communications, meetings with open sessions cannot be held. "And they can't update the federal registry with a revised agenda stating no open session because the federal registry is closed."

Principal investigators who had been counting on awards to pay the salaries of new graduate students and postdocs are now left wondering if their labs will be able to make it through the summer, let alone take on new members.

Referencing the hold on submissions to the Federal Register, MIT neuroscientist Nancy Kanwisher posted on social media Wednesday: "So much for the grant I submitted last September, which was supposed to be reviewed next week. Hardly the biggest tragedy on the current scale of things, but it will force me to severely downsize my already small lab."

Fears were similar for one computational genomics researcher at a prominent East Coast institution who asked for anonymity for fear of being targeted by the new administration. "We have people coming to visit the lab next week, and these are students we haven't made offers to yet because we can't," he said. "I don't know what I'm going to tell them."

Beyond the immediate harm to young scientists, he worries about the long-term damage to fields like computer science and biomedical engineering—areas where the U.S. has long been the world leader. "If we stop training students, we're going to lose that lead very quickly," he said. "It's not clear anyone else is going to pick up the ball. We're just going to be worse off and people won't even be aware of it—it's hard to notice when it takes 20 years instead of 10 to get a cure."

Cuts within NIH are also adding to the rapidly constricting pool of places prospective scientists can go to train. Since the 1960s, the NIH has provided opportunities for recent college graduates to spend one or two years in a full-time research position within one of the institute's labs, which many scientists see as a key tool for recruiting young people into biomedical fields. On Feb. 1, a notice appeared on the NIH website announcing that all training programs had paused recruitment "pending guidance from Health and Human Services."

The NIH's Postbac Program, which provides recent college graduates with research positions and career advising and last year admitted roughly 1,600 people, will not be accepting any new applicants for 2025, according to an NIH employee who asked for anonymity for fear of repercussions.

Of course, that is my add.

"It's a vital link in the training of doctors and biomedical scientists in the country," the NIH employee said. "You can't find a medical school or biomed program that doesn't have students from the postbac program."

And it is ending.

While the Trump administration may be hoping that the headwinds it's creating for academic hiring may push recent graduates or newly minted Ph.D.s into private industry, it's unlikely to play out that way because of the speed and scale of the disruption. "Pharmaceutical firms are not going to suddenly open up more jobs for graduates to

adapt to this situation," said Ding. More likely is that people will start looking for opportunities outside the U.S., or wind up without jobs altogether, she added.

At this point, it's still too early to say if these are the first signs of losing a generation of American scientists. But even people like Ding, who track the data that could provide clues about how extensive the damage will be, are facing uncertainty about their ability to continue their own work.

Her plans to hire a postdoc are currently on hold as she waits to find out if a grant she has through the National Science Foundation—which is facing its own drastic cuts—will come through.

(Mr. HUSTED assumed the Chair.)

I mean, honestly, I am here because I said at the beginning, some 9 hours ago, that I was going to stand here because what is going on in America is not normal. We have gone through healthcare cuts. We have gone through Social Security being attacked and undermined and slashed, and the Department of Education. But if those things don't worry you, statements like this should:

It is still a little too early to say that these things are the first signs of losing a generation of American scientists.

I know this. I have been privileged. I studied at Oxford University overseas. I have studied at Stanford University in Silicon Valley, and I have studied at Yale.

I watched friends get degrees in the sciences and things I couldn't spell, and they had options, not just in America. But for the brightest minds on the planet Earth, there is a global competition going on for them from Canada to Oxford, to countries in Asia.

If you are telling me that thousands of people, right now, 71 days into the Trump administration, are losing opportunities in the sciences to do research in the most important areas of human endeavor can't get hired, they will go elsewhere.

For over a generation, America has led the planet Earth because of this combination between research universities, private sector industry, and government. How do I know this? Because I am here because of it. The whole computer revolution in America was because incredible computer science researchers at academic institutions were partnering with industry and being funded in many ways by the government, and it helped companies like IBM with their mainframes dominate.

My dad was one of IBM's first Black people hired as a salesman in the Washington, DC-Maryland area. My parents were IBMers because when scientific endeavor explodes into new industry, new ideas, new biomedical breakthroughs, it creates a ripple effect in our economy lifting so many people up.

And in 71 days, Donald Trump's actions have led scientific articles like this to talk about a postbac program that provides bright recent college graduates—brilliant people, 1,600 of them—to usually get jobs to be canceled.

And this article laments from scientists—not political people, not poli-

ticians—that this is a crisis. It is a crisis in America, and we haven't held one hearing on this in Congress.

Yet university after university—I can't be the only Senator having this happen—not just from my State. The universities are coming from New York to California, sounding the alarm that we are going to lose our competitive edge against one of our greatest competitors, China, which is doubling down, as the article said, in research on the sciences.

But let me just give you some examples, and then I will yield for a question. I want to talk about some New Jersey institutions that have written me:

Rutgers has been a partner in the Air Force Research Laboratory Minority Leaders Research Collaborative Program, a grant which has been led by the Ohio State University and is on pause.

God forbid they use the word "minority."

And the annual program review and summer internship programs are not expected to happen this year.

Rutgers School of Nursing has been working with the Institute of Human Virology in Nigeria on an action to sustain precision in HIV response toward epidemic control, and they were funded through a CDC and PEPFAR grant. A stop work order came in.

Multiple Rutgers entities have received communications from Federal Agencies related to DEIA cancellation of apprenticeship programs.

Many conferences have been canceled that are trying to find the best minds wherever they might be because there is many geniuses at Howard and Fisk and Morehouse that are often overlooked.

Annika Barber, a faculty at the Rutgers department of molecular biology and biochemistry writes me this:

Rutgers holds an NIH initiative for maximizing student development training grant that supports an additional five doctoral students. This grant expires in January 2026, and we put in for renewal this fall, for which I wrote a letter of support. However, it seems likely that this grant proposal will not even be reviewed.

I just completed the first year of funding on my NIH Maximizing Investigators' Research Award and put in my progress report for the next years of funding. These are non-competing renewals, which means they don't go through peer review. In the past, they were reviewed by the NIH program officials to ensure the funds were being managed in accordance with the approval grant and the research funds.

However, NIH has been extremely slow to process even these noncompetitive renewals. This type of grant requires a plan for enhancing the work.

I want to read this last letter. It is handwritten:

I am writing you not only as a concerned parent that believes in progress, education, and the power of science to improve lives.

My daughter is a Ph.D. in neuroscience, dedicating her life to research that has the potential to save countless lives. As a minority in science, she has worked tirelessly to overcome barriers in a field that is already competitive and abandoned.

Watching the current political attacks on research funding is devastating not just her

future but the future of the American country. Science is not political. It serves all people.

Yet funding cuts to Agencies like NIH and the National Science Foundation threaten to halt critical research that leads to medical breakthroughs. These cuts will not only slow progress in fighting diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's, but they will also discourage young, diverse scientists, many of whom have already fought hard to be in these spaces, from staying in the field. This is not just about scientists. It is about every American.

Diseases do not know political parties. Without adequate research funding, we are all at risk of losing the chance for better treatments, new cures, and improved healthcare. If we truly want a stronger and more innovative America, we must invest in science, not abandon it.

Defunding research will also harm our economy. Scientific innovation drives job creation, medical advancements, and global progress. A country that does not invest in science is a country that falls behind.

Mr. MURPHY. Does the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. I thank the Senator.

What the Senator is outlining is an extraordinary assault not just on education but on the knowledge economy.

I want to bring manufacturing jobs back to this country, but I understand—I think everybody understands—that we are not going to be a nation filled with low-skilled manufacturing jobs. We are going to be a nation that does high-skilled manufacturing. We are going to be a nation that invents things. We are going to be a nation that is dependent on engineering and on invention. We are going to be a knowledge economy.

We are today, but we are going to be even more reliant on maintaining and expanding our knowledge edge on the rest of the world, given the fact that the pace of change and the oncoming transformation that will come from robotics and AI will make it even more important for a nation to have the most highly skilled, most highly educated workforce possible in order to stay ahead of the curve and not have employment be buried by automation and artificial intelligence.

So this is a moment in which we should be doubling down on our support for the knowledge economy, on an integration of public sector research and private sector research, which has always been the genius of American economy. We did that integration better than anybody, and it is not coincidental that we leap-frogged the rest of the world when it came to that innovation economy.

But what the Senator is explaining is that the Trump administration is waging a war on the knowledge economy. It is literally signing our economic death warrant by coming after the foundational strength of our Nation, which is that public-private sector integration.

I just checked in with the University of Connecticut, which is going to lose \$165 million because of this illegal

change that the Trump administration has implemented, dramatically cutting the amount of research dollars that go to institutions with NIH grants.

I will just read half their list. They gave me a list of all their research projects that are going to either be eliminated or slowed for diminished:

A project for improving physical and cognitive function in aging; a project for improving outcomes for people with autism; a project for understanding neural mechanisms for language and reading, including people with dyslexia; funding for prevention and care for HIV patients; projects for studying the leading causes of death and disability in the United States, including cancer, obesity, Alzheimer's disease, and substance abuse; projects studying treatments for rare diseases and genetic disorders with specific impacts on health, including sickle cell, mitochondrial disorders, Rett syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, muscle and bone regeneration research, tick-borne diseases.

The University of Connecticut faces the same crisis as all the other institutions listed in that incredibly long STAT news article.

And as you mentioned, research is not going to wait around for this crisis to pass. They are going to accept offers from research institutions in other countries, from our European allies to our Asian competitors. We are going to lose our competitive edge when it comes to research.

It is worth noting that this change in research funding is illegal. Article I vests the spending power of the Federal Government in Congress. That is plain and simple, and there are lots of good reasons why our Founding Fathers did that, Senator BOOKER. They were determined to keep the spending power out of the hands of the executive branch because they had seen how the British King used the Treasury in order to compel loyalty and to punish opposition: You get money if you are loyal to me.

You get money if you are loyal to me; I withhold money from you if you are disloyal to me.

And so Congress got the spending power. We decided the exact rate of reimbursement for medical research. We were very specific about it in the statute that we passed, Republicans and Democrats.

This cut in funding for institutes of higher education's research that has been implemented by the administration is illegal on its face.

Congress said exactly how research funding should be allocated; the President is ignoring that statute and implementing a unilateral cut.

It has been enjoined by the Federal court. Hopefully, if the courts follow the law, it will be permanently stopped.

But it is important to note that it stands in a larger context of the Federal Government using its spending power—excuse me—the Trump administration trying to seize control of Federal spending in order to do that work that our Founding Fathers were so worried about.

We have seen over the past several weeks the administration march through school after school, trying to cut individual deals with institutions of higher education. We will release your funding only after you sign a bilateral agreement with the administration lining your institute of higher education's priorities up with the political interests of the administration.

This is exactly what our Founding Fathers were trying to avoid: the Executive using the spending power to compel loyalty from individuals and institutions. What they are doing is illegal.

And it is beyond me why my Republican colleagues, our Republican colleagues, stand idly by while the spending power vested in Congress by the Constitution is ripped from us.

But, Senator BOOKER, I guess I am going to ask you the same question I did when it came to this assault on Social Security, and it is a simple question. And I will lay out a little bit of a predicate. The question is: Why?

What the administration has done is extraordinary, proposing to close the Department of Education—wildly unpopular. Nobody is asking for that—waging this illegal and unconstitutional assault on our knowledge economy, suspending funding for institutions of higher education, research budgets, when, plainly, the statute says they cannot do that. So why engage in this extraordinary action to essentially destroy America's knowledge economy from elementary school all the way up to graduate education?

Well, as we have talked about, as you laid out, it can't be because you are trying to help the economy. This destroys the economy. I mean, this is the worst thing that you could probably do for the economy is to wage this open, transparent, proudful assault on research because we will not survive as an economy unless we are the place where cutting-edge research and invention happens. We just won't.

And so researchers now, who are having all of their offers suspended by major colleges and universities, they are looking elsewhere. Maybe they are hoping that the offer still comes through, but they are dialing up other competitors, many of them outside of the United States.

There was a story out of the University of Cambridge in England a couple weeks ago in which their administrators were talking about the bounty that they are receiving as some of the highest class researchers in the world are coming to them because they don't believe that they will have any source of stable funding from the United States.

Mr. BOOKER. Wow.

Mr. MURPHY. So it can't be about helping us create jobs or supporting our economy. This is, no doubt, an assault on the economy.

One of the complaints that I hear often about elementary and secondary education is that the Department of Education was engaged in micro-

management, right? That it was a Federal school board, and we want to get the Federal Government out of the business of dictating what local schools will do.

Well, that is not a credible explanation for what is happening because, in fact, the Trump administration is telegraphing that they are going to actually jump into the micromanagement of our local schools.

Nobody has any idea what "DEI" means. Let's just be honest. It means something different to every single official in the Trump administration. It is just a proxy to impose a set of reactionary, rightwing values on our schools or on our Federal Agencies.

I asked a question of the nominee to be the alleged last Secretary of Education as to whether or not African-American history could be taught in our high schools any longer, and her answer was essentially maybe not. I don't know, but DEI might mean that you can't teach African-American history. It might mean that the Federal Government is going to comb through every syllabus in every high school in the entire country and tell you what courses you can teach and what courses you can't. And if there are any words in there that our AI algorithm doesn't like—like "African"—can't teach it. That is a level of micromanagement never seen before in the Federal Government.

And so the reason that they are cracking down on the Department of Education or eliminating funding for research is not because they are trying to get the Federal Government out of the management of our schools, because they are doing exactly the opposite. They are telling you that your school is not going to be able to make decisions on what classes it offers its students. It is going to be Linda McMahon, the former CEO of the World Wrestling Federation, that is going to be in charge of whether your school can teach African-American history. OK?

So then what is the reason, Senator BOOKER? And I will, you know, just give you a couple suggestions: Well, maybe it is just to compel loyalty, right? Maybe it is just to use that money to compel loyalty so that boards of education or colleges are only teaching conservative or right-leaning curriculum.

Maybe it is to try to quell protests on campuses so that there isn't an ability for students to robustly protest the policies of the regime.

Maybe it is just to destroy the idea of objective truth. I mean, this whole scandal over Signal has lots of elements to it, but I think one of the most worrying things for the American public, why it is still a story a week later, is because the Secretary of Defense looked the American public in the eye and said: 2 plus 2 equals 9. Right? He said: Those Signal texts you saw did not involve war plans, did not involve classified information.

The American public was like: Wait a second. We read them. I am not dumb. I know those were war plans. I know that that was classified information.

But if you are in the business of trying to unwind democracy, you have to destroy objective truth. You have to make everything political. You have to make everything subjective.

Where is objective truth midwived? It is in our education system. That is where we learn 2 plus 2 equals 4 every time. But if you want to undermine the foundation of a democracy, then you undermine the place where truth happens.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. MURPHY. OK. Maybe it is the same agenda with Social Security, just come up with an excuse to privatize it all. Just take all the money that is going to good, public sector research and just move it all into the private sector so it can be a source to reward the friends of President Trump. That could be a rationale as well.

Or maybe it is even simpler. Maybe it is just to own the libs. Maybe it is just that, historically, Democrats on the left have maybe talked about education more than Republicans have, even though, to me, it was always something we both cared about. Whether or not I agree with George Bush's "No Child Left Behind" plan, at least he was walking into the Capitol with a plan to try to improve education.

But maybe it is just that Democrats on the left have historically talked more about education. And if you believe, as Donald Trump does, that all politics is zero sum, anything the Democrats are for must be, by definition, bad for America. And Democrats seem to like college, and they seem to really support our schools, so we have to destroy our colleges, and we have to destroy public education. Because if the left is for it, it must be evil. Maybe that is the reason they are doing it.

But that is the question I pose to you because it has nothing to do with our economy. It has nothing to do with getting the Federal Government out of the management of schools and colleges. There is another agenda here, and it doesn't seem to be an agenda that squares with anything that the American people have been asking, Senator BOOKER.

Mr. BOOKER. I just want to answer you. Again, I would drive myself mad trying to understand what the ambitions of Trump were or the ambitions behind some of the crazy stuff in Project 2025 that he said wasn't there, and he tried to run away from it because it was so unpopular, and now so much of it is being done. It almost sounds too partisan, too insane.

What I do want to do, Senator MURPHY, in answer to your question—all I can do is try to be as fair and factual in describing what is happening in our country and appeal to people who are moderates in this country, the people who are fair arbiters of what is happening, to try to appeal to them that this is a crisis.

So when university after university after university is cutting scientific research, stopping bringing in the best minds, Ph.D. candidates, post-docs, when they are telling you that they are stopping investment in state-of-the-art research buildings, when they are telling you that they are shutting down programs to bring the youngest, brightest minds in and our competitor China is doing the exact opposite, flowing money through because China understands if we get two steps ahead of America on quantum computing, we can break all kinds of encryptions. We can locate every submarine they have. China understands if we can get two steps ahead of America on artificial intelligence, it is an endgame for them.

This is a global competition, and a President, in 71 days—if you are a moderate in America and just want America to win in human endeavor, look at what the President is doing. And here is to the point you were driving, Senator MURPHY. It is Orwellian.

The bastions of freedom that are our universities, as an article from Fareed Zakaria has said, even if universities got too woke and too excessive, the antidote to that isn't to try to shut down the thought of the left. It is to try to make a fair, more competitive marketplace for ideas from all around the political spectrum.

But this isn't about politics; it is about science; it is about research; it is about cutting NIH funding, science funding. But I want to stick with that because that is the controversial nub, right?

Like, we need to go after DEI programs. I am hearing it all the time. It was like the confusion I had 5 years ago when people were asking me: Oh, the Republicans are talking about critical race theory. As my father says, I have more degrees than the month of July, but I am not hot. But I had to go back and research: What is critical race theory? Oxford, Stanford, Yale grad, I wasn't sure what they were talking about. And this is the rub on that because I don't want to just talk about what is obvious, which should enrage people on both sides of the aisle, not just enrage people on both sides of the aisle because of the China outcompeting us, but because we allocated this money in a bipartisan way that he is now trying to pull back. That should raise a violation of article I of the Constitution.

But I want to stick in this more controversial era that you talked about that has, all across the country, people banning books. When I heard Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" was being taken out of libraries, when I heard my favorite author James Baldwin was being taken out of libraries—what kind of world do we live in where, somehow, studying what they call Black history is something that we have to—that Trump feels like it is a rally for people to stop, where a person working for the Department of Education can't look you in the eye and say: Yes, we need to

study Black history? Black history is American history.

I had a brilliant friend of mine, brilliant. He looked at me with deadpan embarrassment and told me he just found out that year about the bombing in Tulsa, OK, something I worked with Senator LANKFORD to do more to memorialize, but he just never knew about it; that this thriving African-American financial community was the first recorded aerial bombing—not Pearl Harbor—in the United States of America, and he was never taught it.

Is that Black history or is that American history?

Why do these people who attack our history think they have to sanitize, homogenize, "Disneyfy" American history to make us proud? I am more proud of our country when we tell the truth about what happened, when we learned from the wretchedness and the difficulties and the bigotries and the hates and demagogues who pit us against each other and how we all overcame that. That is our greatness. How the genius of inventors that were women or Blacks in the most oppressive of times still manifested their genius that transformed humanities. These are stories that should make every American more proud.

So, yes, when you have a President now that is making people scrape through programs that they don't even know what they are doing, but if there were more diversity in it, that is bad? That is insanity.

My mom worked for IBM before they used words like "DEI." One of her jobs was to find a bigger pool of highly qualified applicants. You know what she did is what is being stopped by the Trump administration. She just made sure that they were going to HCBUs to find the brightest students so that their applicant pool would be better. This isn't about preferential treatment for one group over another; it is about trying to create a more competitive pool where we get the best of the best. It is about merit-based.

And this President talked about merit—and I watched Senator WHITEHOUSE ask one of the top lawyers of the EPA if he ever brought a case, if he ever had a hearing, if he ever did a deposition—no, no, no. Wait a minute. How are you qualified for this job?

And that is the conflict in the logic that I am observing. In one sense, they are exalting the wealthy elites. I have never imagined that I would see a Presidential inauguration where the billionaires, leaders of tech companies, would sit in front of Cabinet members, many of whom were billionaires themselves—but that kind of elitism. Yet they call academic excellence, brilliance, and achievement in the sciences at these universities the elites we need to go after.

If we start going after our educational institutions and weakening their ability to advance excellence in human endeavor, we are injuring ourselves, and we have models for that. As

Fareed Zakaria says, the best example was Mao Zedong and the cultural revolution where one of the first groups they went after were their universities. Now they are reversing that. They watched what we did so well. They are doubling down on their funding of universities. They are taking their best scientists and taking away their passports because they don't want them to come here and study. They are trying to get ahead of us in DeepSeek and AI. They are trying to get ahead of us in quantum computers. They are trying to get ahead of us in robotics. They are trying to get ahead of us in biomedical engineering. They are trying to get ahead of us in all of these things. They know the way they do it is do what America did in the sixties, seventies, eighties, the nineties, the aughts, 2010—to do what they did all those times and look at them now.

Mr. MURPHY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield while still retaining the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. I take the Senator's point, my friend's point. I am probing tonight for the why because it is the obvious question. It doesn't make sense, right? On its face, this intentional chaos—this intentional chaos in Social Security, in Medicare, in higher education, it doesn't make sense. It is not about efficiency. It is not about jobs. So what is it about?

But your point is a good one. That may not actually be the conversation that a lot of apolitical Americans are asking. They may just be looking at this on the face and say: How does this impact me? It doesn't matter to me why it is happening; it matters how it is going to impact me.

There is no doubt that this assault on higher education has none; it does. We are, as you said it better than I have, we are just in a race.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. MURPHY. We are just in a race, and we just decided to slow down to a walk, which is a shame because we are fast. We are fast. This country is quick. And our coach just told us, start walking while the other guys speed up.

This is why we have urgency because the race—this one is not. Maybe it is a marathon. But it is one of those races where if the other team gets too big a lead, it is going to be hard to catch up.

So in the next 3½ years, if we just stand down in terms of supporting the knowledge economy, we are going to shed millions of jobs—millions of jobs. And once those centers of excellence, research excellence are outside the United States, it is not like the next President can just come back in and fix it. That becomes a permanent liability for us.

The reason that I am here on the floor with you, Senator BOOKER, is because I agree with you that this is not normal. But I also agree with you that we have to wake our colleagues up fast because like a second ago, I thought we all agreed on the fact that we need to

support the knowledge economy. Like 2 seconds ago, we were all raising hands together, Republicans and Democrats, that we finally started putting big new dollars into NIH. We did a \$2 billion increase, I think, a few years ago, and it was a big bipartisan achievement. And all of a sudden, just because Donald Trump is in the White House, we have lost the bipartisan consensus of the knowledge economy.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to interrupt you before you go to your last question. I know you want to get your last question out before I get to the next area so related to this, immigration. I mean, the brightest minds on the planet Earth are coming here.

Mr. MURPHY. I am good. I made my point.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to say something to you. You got me triggered when you said we had some consensus over the last 4 years. I love how you say just yesterday. I remember the CHIPS and Science Act. That was a bipartisan bill. I was sitting in a SCIF with all of us, and I watched a whole national security apparatus talk about why science endeavors and chipmaking and the breakthroughs that are happening on chips are so essential for our national security and how we had to stay ahead of the competition. And we marched out of that meeting in a bipartisan fashion. We saw this in the bipartisan work we have been doing on AI here, talking about how America has to lead in this area.

And with all of that bipartisan vigor, we let a President come in and in 71 days, halt scientific research, pausing literally experiments in their tracks, halting researchers in their tracks, shaking universities to the core that are afraid of free expression for getting on the wrong side of “Dear Leader” that it might cost them their science funding. So you are putting your finger on it.

But can I just say something on a personal level because I just want to remind folks, as we are closing in on the 10th hour, that you and I were here for 15, and you are here because you agree with me. You agree with me that from science and research to higher education, Department of Education, Social Security, to healthcare in America, we are at a crisis. Any one of those alone should have Americans—but the case we are making going through all these, we are pulling from people on the left and the right. We quoted Republican Governors. We have quoted Republican mayor organizations, represented by organizations. We quoted Republican business people. We quoted the Wall Street Journal. This is not a partisan crisis that people across the spectrum are pointing to.

But I do want to point out, you have been such a good friend to me to spend 10 hours, almost, on the floor, and it means a lot to me tonight. Thank you for that.

As I switch to immigration, I appreciate the sentiments that you have and

that you had after the Pulse shooting that you were so worried about when I listened to your maiden speech when you first got here in the Senate that we would normalize gun violence in this country. What I am worried about—I share your worry there. I grew up in a time where fire drills were the big thing. And the space between people ducking and covering because of nuclear fears and left school before we were a country that had more active shooter drills than fire drills, and we just sort of are normalizing this terror in our country and haven't stepped up to the challenge of really doing something about it.

This is one of these crises where if we act like business as usual, 71 days so far of the Trump administration, when we get to 100 days, catastrophic things could have happened to Medicaid and healthcare, crashing of research for science, attacks on programs our senior citizens rely on. We, as a country have to, as I said at the very beginning 10 hours ago almost—we have to do what John Lewis challenged us to do: To stand up, to speak up, to get in good trouble, necessary trouble.

And tonight, my friend, in the wee hours—there are so many songs about 4 o'clock in the morning. It is like the hour nobody should be awake. I want to thank the Presiding Officer for being here. I want to thank the clerks and parliamentary staff and the impositions. But the cries of American citizens for their leaders to do something different, to stand up, to speak up—I felt like this has to be done. Let's keep going. Almost 10 hours in, I am thankful.

We are going to start the next session. Like I am trying to do in all of these, I am trying to elevate the voices that don't get to come to this place—voices I am hearing from, voices that identify themselves as a Republican veteran, a Democrat. Most of them are just people saying this is not normal. Many of them are saying, “Do something.” Some of them get me very emotional saying, “What can I do?” I get that question a lot: “Tell me what I can do to try to stop this.”

We are going to take this issue of immigration. And here is—I am not sure where this person is from. My staff has covered it up, probably to protect the person's identity. I am going to read this handwritten note. It is from New Jersey.

Thank you, Senator Booker. Please continue to fight the good fight against the injustices being done by the current administration. I am the pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church in New Brunswick. As a faith leader and your constituent, I am deeply concerned about the treatment of LGBTQ people and immigrants by this administration. The demonization and marginalization of these groups is unchristian and deeply offensive to the values of my faith. I ask that you continue to oppose all Executive orders and legislation that targets these groups. You have been a consistent ally. Please continue to be a champion for justice for all people, but especially the most vulnerable.

Another person, late yesterday, in fact:

Court filings of the Trump administration reveal that a mistakenly deported Maryland father with protected legal status to this horrific prison in El Salvador—Abrego Garcia is married to a U.S. citizen and has a 5-year-old disabled child who is a U.S. citizen. He has no criminal record in the United States. Despite receiving a legal status call withholding of removal where a United States immigration judge found that he would more likely than not face persecution if deported to El Salvador, the Trump administration deported him, where? The very country from which he fled gang violence.

Here is a story that was written about him in *The Atlantic*.

The Trump administration acknowledged in a court filing on Monday that it had grabbed a Maryland father with protected legal status and mistakenly deported him to El Salvador. It was said that U.S. courts lack jurisdiction to order his return from the mega prison where he's now locked up.

The case appears to be the first time the Trump administration has admitted to errors when it sent three plane loads of Salvadorian and Venezuelan deportees to El Salvador's . . . "Terrorism Confinement Center" on March 15. Attorneys for several Venezuelan deportees have said that the Trump administration falsely labeled their clients as gang members because of their tattoos . . . But in Monday's court filing, attorneys for the government admitted that the Salvadorian man, Kilmar Abrego Garcia, was deported accidentally. "Although ICE was aware of his protection from removal to El Salvador, Abrego Garcia was removed to El Salvador because of an administrative error," the government told the court. Trump lawyers said the court has no ability to bring him back now that Abrego Garcia is in Salvadorian custody.

Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, Abrego Garcia's attorney, says he's never seen a case in which the government knowingly deported someone who had already received protected legal status from an immigration judge. He is asking the court to order the Trump administration to ask for Abrego Garcia's return and, if necessary, to withhold payment to the Salvadorian government, which says it's charging the United States \$6 million a year to jail U.S. deportees.

[The] Trump administration . . . told the court to dismiss the request on multiple grounds, including . . . Trump's primacy in foreign affairs.

"[P]rimacy in foreign affairs." I am not going to stop now, but I ask anybody who has read the Constitution to understand that the President of the United States is not King. He does not have primacy in foreign affairs.

I continue with the article:

"The claim that the court is powerless to order any relief," Sandoval-Moshenberg told me, "if that's true, the immigration laws are meaningless—all of them—because the government can deport whoever they want, wherever they want, whenever they want, and no court can do anything about it once it's done."

Court filings show Abrego Garcia came to the United States at the age of 16 in 2011 after fleeing gang threats in his native El Salvador. In 2019, he received a form of protected legal status known as "withholding of removal" from a U.S. immigration judge who found he would likely be targeted by gangs if he was deported back.

Abrego Garcia, who is married to a U.S. citizen and has a 5-year-old disabled child who is also a U.S. citizen, has no criminal record in the United States, according to his attorney. The Trump administration does

not claim he has a criminal record, but called him a "danger to the community" and an active member of MS-13, the Salvadorian gang that Trump has declared a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

Sandoval-Moshenberg said those charges are false, and the gang label stems from a 2019 incident where Abrego Garcia and three other men were detained in a Home Depot parking lot by a police detective in Prince Georges County, Maryland. During questioning, one of the men told officers Abrego was a gang member, but the man offered no proof and police said they didn't believe him, filings show. Police did not identify him as a gang member.

Abrego Garcia was not charged with a crime, but he was handed over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement after the arrest to face deportation. In those proceedings, the government claimed that a reliable informant had identified him as a ranking member of MS-13. Abrego Garcia and his family hired an attorney and fought the government's attempt to deport him. He received "withholding of removal" six months later, a protected status.

It is not a path to permanent U.S. residency, but it means the government won't deport him back to his home country because he's more likely than not to face harm there.

Abrego Garcia has had no contact with any law enforcement agency since his release, according to his attorney. He works full time as a union sheet metal apprentice, has complied with requirements to check in annually with ICE, and cares for his five-year-old son, who has autism and a hearing defect, and is unable to communicate verbally.

On March 12, Abrego Garcia had picked up his son after work from the boy's grandmother's house when ICE officers stopped the car, saying his protected status had changed. Officers waited for Abrego's wife to come to the scene and take care of the boy, then drove him away in handcuffs. Within two days, he had been transferred to an ICE staging facility in Texas, along with other detainees the government was preparing to send to El Salvador. Trump had invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, and the government planned to deport two plane loads of Venezuelans along with a separate group of Salvadorians.

Abrego's family has had no contact with him since he was sent to the megaprison in El Salvador, known as the CECOT.

C-E-C-O-T.

His wife spotted her husband in news photographs released by Salvadorian President . . . Bukele on the morning of March 16, after a U.S. District Judge had told the Trump administration to halt the flights.

"Oopsie," Bukele wrote on social media, taunting the judge.

Abrego Garcia's wife recognized her husband's decorative arm tattoo and scars, according to the court filing. The image showed Salvadoran guards in black ski masks frog-marching him into the prison, with his head down—

Shoved down—

toward the floor. The CECOT is the same prison Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem visited last week, recording videos for social media while standing in front of a cell packed with silent detainees.

If the government wants to deport someone with protective status, the standard course would be to reopen the case and introduce new evidence arguing for deportation. The deportation of a protected status holder has even stunned some government attorneys I've been in touch with who are track-

ing the case, who declined to be named because they weren't authorized to speak to the press. [One of those people texted me: "What" period "the" period "explicative" period.]

Sandoval-Moshenberg told the court he believes Trump officials deported his client through extrajudicial means because they believed that going through the immigration judge process took too long and feared that they might not win all of their cases.

Officials at ICE and the Department of Homeland Security did not respond to a request for comment. The Monday court filing by the government indicates officials knew Abrego Garcia had legal protections shielding him from deportation to El Salvador.

"ICE was aware of this grant of withholding the removal at the time [of] Abrego Garcia's removal from the United States. Reference was made . . . on internal forms" . . . Abrego Garcia was not on the initial manifest of the deportation flight, but was listed as "an alternate," the government attorneys explained. As other detainees were removed from the flight for various reasons, Abrego Garcia "moved up the list."

The flight manifest "did not indicate that Abrego Garcia should not be removed," the attorneys said. "Through administrative error, Abrego Garcia was removed from the United States to El Salvador. This was an oversight," [the government admitted.] But despite this, they told the court that Abrego Garcia's deportation was carried out "in good faith."

I am going to go into a section now, and I am going to read things by conservative Justices and liberal Justices to some of the most conservative Supreme Court Justices who say that this is outrageous in this Nation.

There are parts of this Constitution that I am going to talk about that talk about due process, that talk about fundamental American ideals. But this is a story and a few others I have heard where Americans who have the status to stay here, who have an American spouse and American children who will be traumatized by this—in this case, a disabled child whose working father is struggling to take care of one of our children, an American child with an American mother—we were told that the President said he was going to be focusing on criminals, and these trumped-up charges, where they admit in court they made a mistake but write such mocking things to judges like "Oopsie" on social media, this cruelty—this is not who we are.

So let's talk about the Constitution first, the Fifth and the 14th Amendments.

The Fifth and 14th Amendments say that no one should shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law. The central promise of those words is an assurance that all levels of the American Government must operate within the law and the bounds of this Constitution. Everybody in this Chamber swears an oath to uphold the Constitution.

But every single day, it just seems our President is challenging constitutional principles. He is pushing past constitutional boundaries. Every day, we are hearing new stories of immigrants—some here illegally, some awaiting trial, most charged with no

crime—being rounded up, detained, arrested, deported, and often just “disappeared.” This is happening without charges, evidence, trials, hearings—without, as the Constitution says, due process.

This is what other governments have done. We have talked about it. On the Foreign Relations Committee, we complain about it to nations across the Earth when they do not show due process, when they disappear people. Maybe you are an immigrant who has never broken the law. Maybe you are a citizen. Even if you think the administration’s immigration agenda doesn’t apply to you, please know that the reckless behavior we are seeing erodes all of our rights.

As for the American mother and the American child right now whose husband was unjustly and illegally deported and is right now in an El Salvadorian prison, think about that.

Denying due process is a slippery slope. We have seen it in other countries. With democratic backsliding, it is a slippery slope. If people can be detained and deported without a hearing, detained and deported without due process, without seeing a judge, nothing will stop them from slipping toward deporting others and making mistakes with an American.

I am one of these people in this body who think our immigration system is in desperate need of reform. It was last updated 40 years ago, so 40 years ago was the last time we acted to update our immigration laws. The failure to update our laws has resulted in our country’s inability to manage unprecedented levels of immigration—not just affecting our country but affecting others. It is an unprecedented influx of applications to enter the United States, which has put pressure and strain on our immigration system and has slowed down the processing times for millions of people trying to immigrate or naturalize legally and made it more difficult to incentivize the world’s brightest minds to come here to contribute to our country’s long-term success.

For millions of Americans, immigration is not a political issue; it is a personal one. There are immigrants around my State and in every State who have waited year after year for Congress to find a bipartisan agreement to improve our system in ways that most Americans agree on, whether you are right or left. They have been waiting for people in Congress to fix our outdated immigration laws, to secure our borders, to dedicate the resources necessary for USCIS to fix the outrageously long processing times for immigration and provide a pathway to legal status for long-term American residents who have followed our laws and have contributed to our society. Some of them know no other country because they came here when they were just months old.

Our immigration laws are so outdated that even the conservative Cato

Institute published a comprehensive policy analysis in 2023, titled “Why Legal Immigration is Nearly Impossible.” In it, the Cato Institute explains:

Today, fewer than 1 percent of the people who want to move permanently to the United States can do so legally. Legal immigration is less like waiting in line and more like winning the lottery. It happens, but it is so rare that it is irrational to expect it in any individual case.

The Cato Institute continues:

For some immigrants, this restrictive system sends them into the black market of illegal immigration. For others, it sends them to other countries, where they contribute to the quality of life in their new homes. And for still others, it requires them to remain in their homeland, often underemployed and sometimes in danger. Whatever the outcome, the system punishes both . . . prospective immigrants and Americans who would associate, contract, and trade with them. Congress and the administration can do better.

I have met with conservatives, I have met with business groups, and I have met with agricultural leaders who all talk to commonsense things we should be doing to improve our immigration system—to protect our borders, yes, but to improve our economy, to improve our scientific research, and to improve our quality of life.

The only way to fix our broken immigration system is for Congress to fix it, to pass comprehensive immigration reform. But instead of a leader—strong leaders who go before Congress taking on the most complex issues but yet have the courage to stand before Congress and pull them together to do hard things—instead of doing that, the last time we made progress in this body, President Trump actively blocked bipartisan legislation. Now he has imposed policies that aren’t just going after criminals; they are dragging in so many others.

When President Trump stopped Republicans from voting on the bipartisan bill that was negotiated in the Senate last year, he stopped us from making strides towards the larger fixes we need.

The administration’s immigration plans are not helping American citizens who are submitting applications so that their spouse or fiancée who is waiting in another country can finally join them in the United States.

The administration right now is not helping American citizens who have been waiting for years for a visa for their brother or their sister or their mother or their father. Uniting families is an American value.

Americans aren’t getting any relief from these extraordinarily long wait times. On the USCIS website, you can check the average processing time for these cases, and most Americans would be shocked—maybe even horrified—to learn just how long it will take for you as an American citizen to bring a husband or a wife or even a child back to the United States with you.

We checked this past weekend, and here are the numbers. For the I-129 fi-

ance visa, the processing time for 80 percent of the cases is 8 months to 3 years. For an I-130 visa, if you are a U.S. citizen petitioning for your spouse, parent, or minor child, then the wait time is anywhere from 17 months to 64 months. That is an average from anywhere from a year and a half to over 5 years. For an I-90, if your green card is destroyed in a flood or a fire, 80 percent of people will be waiting for almost a year and a half—17 months—to just get a new copy.

These numbers are shocking, and they don’t even take into account long wait times for visa appointments at the U.S. consulate or Embassies. In India, for example, the average wait time for an appointment is well over 400 days.

American citizens, including thousands of my constituents in New Jersey, are so angry. They are waiting far too long for their cases to be prioritized and adjudicated.

But when Trump reallocates all the resources within our immigration system to conducting the largest mass deportation of people in history, American citizens are paying the price not just from USCIS processing times; we pay the price because to do this, he is diverting actual law enforcement resources away from solving crimes and stopping terrorism. His actions are actually making us less safe. We pay the price because these policies are eroding constitutional principles as well as making us less safe by taking law enforcement away from their efforts.

This plan is about conditioning Americans to the suspension of due process, first for immigrants. If we let due process erode for immigrants, it erodes for Americans.

Let me outline a little bit about how this is happening and why this is a crisis.

Two weeks ago, Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act. The Alien Enemies Act of 1798 allows the President to detain or deport the natives and citizens of an enemy nation that we are at war with—the 1798 Act. The President can detain or deport these immigrants without a hearing, with no due process, even ones who are lawfully present in the United States.

The Alien Enemies Act was last used during one of our country’s darkest moments—the internment of Japanese, German, and Italian nationals during World War II—but even then, we still ensured that due process was followed.

Prior to detention, people subjected to the Alien Enemies Act in the 1940s appeared before the alien enemy hearing board, where they could at least present evidence that they had no ties to Axis powers.

As one circuit court judge recently said of Trump’s use of the Alien Enemies Act:

There’s no regulations, and nothing was adopted by the agency officials that were administering this. [The] people weren’t given notice. They weren’t told where they were going. They were given those people on those

planes on that Saturday and had no opportunity to file habeas or any type of action to challenge the removal.

The standards of 1940 during World War II were higher than the standards of this President.

The following are people who Trump has targeted and removed without criminal charges, without a hearing, without evidence, to a prison rife with human rights abuses in El Salvador. These are the people he has sent there: a tattoo artist seeking asylum who entered the country legally; an aspiring pop musician with a tattoo of a hummingbird; a 24-year-old who used to teach swimming classes for children with developmental disabilities and has a tattoo of an autism awareness ribbon in honor of his brother; a Venezuelan who had fled violence in Venezuela last year and came to the United States to seek asylum. His lawyer wrote on social media:

ICE alleged that his tattoos are gang related. They are absolutely not. Our client worked in the arts in Venezuela. He is gay, LGBTQ. His tattoos are benign. He has no criminal record.

Another Venezuelan removed to the El Salvador prison is a barber with no criminal history. Another is a professional soccer player, has a tattoo with a soccer ball and rosary closely resembling the logo of his favorite soccer team.

This is stunning what we are doing. These people were swept up and sent to another prison known for its human rights abuses because they were Venezuelan and had tattoos, benign tattoos.

An article was published in one periodical about the anguish from families. Here are a few excerpts from the article:

“You’re here because of your tattoos.” The Trump administration sent Venezuelans to El Salvador’s infamous prison. Their families are looking for answers.”

On Friday, March 14, Arturo Suarez Trejo called his wife, Nathali Sanchez, from an immigration detention center in Texas. Suarez, a 33-year-old [male] native of Caracas, Venezuela, explained that his deportation flight had been delayed. He told his wife he [still] would be home soon. Suarez did not . . . go back to Venezuela. Still, there was at least a silver lining: In December, Sanchez had given birth to their daughter, Nahiara. Suarez would finally have a chance to meet [their] three-month-old baby girl he had [never] . . . ever seen.

But, Sanchez told [the outlet] she [had] not heard from Suarez since. Instead, last weekend, she found herself zooming in on a photo the government of El Salvador published of Venezuelan men the Trump administration had sent to President Nayib Bukele’s infamous Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT. “I realized that one of them was my husband,” she said. “I recognized him by [his] tattoo . . . by his ear, and [a scar on] his chin. Even though I couldn’t see his face, I knew it was him.” The photo Sanchez examined . . . a highly produced propaganda video promoted by Secretary of State . . . and the White House—showed Venezuelans shackled in prison uniforms as they were pushed around by guards and had their heads shaved.

The tattoo on Suarez’s neck is of a colibri, a hummingbird. His wife said it is meant to

symbolize “harmony and good energy.” She said his other tattoos, like a palm tree on his hand—an homage to Suarez’s late mother’s use of a Venezuelan expression about God being greater than a coconut tree—were similarly innocuous. [Needless to say], they may be why Suarez has been effectively disappeared by the US government into a Salvadoran mega-prison.

We must keep our country safe from violent criminals, people with long criminal records who are not citizens. I think every American would agree they should be deported. Immigrants to this country, surprisingly, have a much lower rate of breaking laws. But if they break laws, I agree.

Maybe you are an immigrant who has never broken a law. Maybe you are a naturalized citizen. Maybe you were born here. The problem with this idea of disappearing people with no due process is that once that foundation is laid, if they are able to defend that lack of due process, to use that law from the 1700s, we begin a process in this country that even conservative Justices of the Supreme Court said is unjustifiable.

Denying people due process pushes us down a road where more exceptions can be made. You cannot deny fundamental rights to another and not endanger them for yourself.

We have created a system now, if Trump is successful, where you can just say, you can just claim, you can just point to someone and say they are from X country or claim that they are part of a gang, and without any due process, without any vetting, without going before any independent arbitrator, you are disappeared because there is just no way to challenge them. No due process for noncitizens means that we are a country in violation of those ideals I talked about from here that say at the beginning of this country, very simply, no one shall be deprived of life, liberty, or the pursuit of property—no one—without due process of law. As soon as we break that, as soon as we violate that, we are going down a road.

Antonin Scalia—I confess, I have disagreed with him on so many things, but this conservative Justice once sat in an interview with Ruth Bader Ginsburg. They had a relationship that I think was special, and it shows that even people who have distinctly different views can still make real human connection in our country. They were asked by an interviewer whether undocumented people have the five freedoms—freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition the government—and here is what the conservative Justice Scalia said:

Oh, I think so. I think anybody who is present in the United States has protections under the United States Constitution. Americans abroad have that protection. Other people abroad do not. They don’t have the protections of our Constitution, but anyone who is present in the United States has the protections of the United States Constitution.

Antonin Scalia, one of the most conservative members of the highest Court in our land.

And, of course, Ginsburg—his ideological opposite—she concurred when she said:

When we get to the 14th Amendment, it doesn’t speak of citizens as some constitutions grant rights to citizens, but our Constitution says “persons” and that the person is every person who is here in our country, documented or undocumented.

Our Constitution is clear on the face. If you are an originalist like Antonin Scalia, and you read the Constitution’s words, you have to stand for the idea that no one should be denied due process; that the government can’t walk up to a human being and grab them off the street and put them on a plane and send them to one of the most notorious prisons in the world and just say, as one of our authorities did, “Oopsie.”

Think about that. And that happened to a father of an American child. Think about that. It happened to a husband of an American woman. Think about that. That happened to a man who a judge already said he had the right to stay.

When the rights of some are violated, it is a threat to the rights of all of us.

In January, ICE agents in New Jersey raided a small business without a warrant and detained a Puerto Rican military veteran, a Boricua, an American citizen—detained him even after he presented his valid ID to those ICE agents. This is one example of so many.

Some Americans Have Already Been Caught in Trump’s Immigration Dragnet. More Will Be.

An article by Nicole Foy.

About a week after President Donald Trump took office, Jonathan Guerrero was sitting at the Philadelphia car wash where he works when immigration agents burst in.

The agents didn’t say why they were there and didn’t show their badges, Guerrero recalled. So the 21-year-old didn’t get a chance to explain that although his parents were from Mexico, he had been born right there in—

The “City of Brotherly Love.”

An agent pointed his gun at Guerrero and handcuffed him. Then they brought in other car wash workers, including Guerrero’s father, who is undocumented. When agents began checking IDs, they finally noticed that Guerrero was a citizen and quickly let him go.

“I said, ‘Look, man, I don’t know who these guys are and what they’re doing,’” said Guerrero. “With anything law-related, I just stay quiet.”

Less than two months into the new Trump administration, there has been a small but steady beat of—

More and more—reported cases like Guerrero’s.

In Utah, agents pulled over and detained a 20-year-old American after he honked at them. In New Mexico, a member of the Mescalero Apache nation more than two hours from the border was questioned by agents who demanded to see their passport. Earlier this month, a Trump voter in Virginia was pulled over and handcuffed by gun-wielding immigration agents.

It’s unclear exactly how many citizens have faced the Trump administration’s dragnet so far. And while previous administrations have mistakenly held Americans too,

there's no firm count of those incidents either.

The government does not release figures on citizens who have been held by immigration authorities. Neither Customs and Border Protection nor Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which handles interior immigration enforcement.

Experts and advocates say that what is clear to them is that Trump's aggressive immigration policies—such as arrest quotas for enforcement agents—make it likely that more citizens will get caught up in immigration sweeps.

"It's really everyone—not just noncitizens or undocumented people—who are in danger of having their liberty violated in this kind of mass deportation machinery."

Asked about reports of Americans getting caught up in administration's enforcement policies, an ICE spokesperson told—

The outlet—

in a written statement that agents are allowed to ask for citizens' identification: "Any US immigration officer has authority to question, without warrant, any alien or person believed to be an alien concerning his or her right to be, or to remain, in the United States." The agency did not respond to questions about specific cases.

The U.S. has gone through spasms of detaining and even deporting large numbers of citizens. In the 1930s and 1940s, federal and local authorities forcibly exiled an estimated 1 million Mexican Americans, including hundreds of thousands of American-born children.

That is our past: An estimated 1 million Mexican Americans, including hundreds of thousands of American-born children, swept up and deported.

[A] U.S. Government Accountability Office report found that immigration authorities asked to hold roughly 600 likely citizens during Trump's first term. The GAO also found that Trump actually deported about 70 likely citizens.

The GAO report did not get into any individual cases. But lawsuits brought against federal immigration agencies detail dozens of cases where plaintiffs received a settlement.

This will accelerate if there is no due process. In its first administration, there was some process, but this will accelerate if there is no due process.

I live in Newark, NJ, and there are dozens of languages spoken in my city. And some of the elders from some of these many different ethnic groups—from European folks who don't speak English to folks from Asia that don't speak English—imagine one of these Americans gets stopped and doesn't have papers on them, and they see a tattoo and, next thing you know, they are sent to Louisiana or Texas. The next thing you know, they are on a flight.

That is not hyperbole. That is not some impossible thing. We know, once due process is eliminated in this country for some, all are in danger. It is a constitutional slippage that Scalia and conservatives who believe in the Constitution nobly object to.

Canadian citizen Jasmine Mooney was detained by ICE for 2 weeks. I saw an interview of her, this White woman, stunned. Here is what she wrote, this Canadian:

There was no explanation, no warning. One minute, I was in an immigration office talk-

ing to an officer about my work visa, which had been approved months before and allowed me, a Canadian, to work in the US. The next, I was told to put my hands against the wall, and patted down like a criminal before being sent to an ICE detention center without the chance to talk to a lawyer.

I grew up in Whitehorse, Yukon, a small town in the northernmost part of Canada. I always knew I wanted to do something bigger with my life. I left home early and moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where I built a career spanning multiple industries—acting in film and television, owning bars and restaurants, flipping condos and managing Airbnbs.

In my 30s, I found my true passion working in the health and wellness industry. I was given the opportunity to help launch an American brand of health tonics called Holy! Water—a job that would involve moving to the US.

I was granted my trade . . . work visa, which allows Canadian and Mexican citizens to work in the US in specific professional occupations, on my second attempt. It goes without saying, then, that I have no criminal record. I also love the US and consider myself to be a kind, hard-working person.

I started working in California and travelled back and forth between Canada and the US multiple times without any complications—until one day, upon returning to the US, a border officer questioned me about my initial visa denial and subsequent visa approval. He asked why I had gone to the San Diego border the second time to apply. I explained that that was where my lawyer's offices were, and that he had wanted to accompany me to ensure there were no issues.

After a long interrogation, the officer told me it seemed "shady" and that my visa hadn't been properly processed. He claimed I also couldn't work for a company in the US that made use of hemp—one of the beverage ingredients. He revoked my visa, and told me I could still work for the company from Canada, but if I wanted to return to the US, I would need to reapply.

I was devastated; I had just started building a life in California. I stayed in Canada for the next few months, and was eventually offered a similar position with a different health and wellness brand.

I restarted the visa process and returned to the same immigration office at the San Diego border, since they had processed my visa before and I was familiar with it. Hours passed, with many confused opinions about my case. The officer I spoke to was kind but told me that, due to my previous issues, I needed to apply for my visa through the consulate. I told her I hadn't been aware I needed to apply that way, but had no problem doing it.

Then she said something strange: "You didn't do anything wrong. You are not in trouble, you are not a criminal."

I remember thinking: Why would she say that? Of course I'm not a criminal!

She then told me they had to send me back to Canada. That didn't concern me; I assumed I would simply book a flight home. But as I sat searching for flights, a man approached me.

"Come with me," he said.

There was no explanation, no warning. He led me to a room, took my belongings from my hands and ordered me to put my hands against the wall. A woman immediately began patting me down. The commands came rapid-fire, one after another, too fast to process.

They took my shoes and pulled out my shoelaces.

"What are you doing? What is happening?" I asked.

"You are being detained."

"I don't understand. What does that mean? For how long?"

"I don't know."

That would be the response to nearly every question I would ask over the next two weeks: "I don't know."

They brought me downstairs for a series of interviews and medical questions, searched my bags and told me I had to get rid of half my belongings because I couldn't take everything with me.

"Take everything with me where?" I asked.

A woman asked me for the name of someone they could contact on my behalf. In moments like this, you realize you don't actually know anyone's phone number anymore. By some miracle, I had recently memorized my best friend Britt's number because I had been putting my grocery points on her account.

I gave them her phone number.

They handed me a mat and a folded-up sheet of aluminum foil.

"What is this?"

"Your blanket."

"I don't understand."

I was taken to a tiny, freezing cement cell with bright fluorescent lights and a toilet. There were five other women lying on their mats with the aluminum sheets wrapped over them, looking like dead bodies. The guard locked the door behind me.

For two days, we remained in that cell, only leaving briefly for food. The lights never turned off, we never knew what time it was and no one answered our questions. No one in the cell spoke English, so I either tried to sleep or meditate to keep from having a breakdown. I didn't trust the food, so I fasted, assuming I wouldn't be there long.

On the third day, I was finally allowed to make a phone call. I called Britt and told her that I didn't understand what was happening, that no one would tell me when I was going home, and that she was my only contact.

They gave me a stack of paperwork to sign and told me I was being given a five-year ban unless I applied for re-entry through the consulate. The officer also said it didn't matter whether I signed the papers or not; it was happening regardless.

I was so delirious that I just signed. I told them I would pay for my flight home and asked when I could leave.

No answer.

Then they moved me to another cell—this time with no mat or blanket. I sat on the freezing cement floor for hours. That's when I realized they were processing me into real jail: The Otay Mesa Detention Center.

I was told to shower, given a jail uniform, fingerprinted and interviewed. I begged for information.

"How long will I be here?"

"I don't know your case," the man said.

"Could be days. Could be weeks. But I'm telling you right now—you need to mentally prepare yourself for months."

Months.

I felt like I was going to throw up.

I was taken to the nurse's office for a medical check. She asked what had happened to me. She had never seen a Canadian there before. When I told her my story, she grabbed my hand and said: "Do you believe in God?"

I told her I had only recently found God, but that I now believed in God more than anything.

"I believe God brought you here for a reason," she said. "I know it feels like your life is in a million pieces, but you will be OK. Through this, I think you are going to find a way to help others."

At the time, I didn't know what that meant. She asked if she could pray for me. I held her hands and wept.

I felt like I had been sent an angel.

I was then placed in a real jail unit: Two levels of cells surrounding a common area, just like in the movies. I was put in a tiny cell alone with a bunk bed and a toilet.

The best part: There were blankets. After three days without one, I wrapped myself in mine and finally felt some comfort.

For the first day, I didn't leave my cell. I continued fasting, terrified that the food might make me sick. The only available water came from the tap attached to the toilet in our cells or a sink in the common area, neither of which felt safe to drink.

Eventually, I forced myself to step out, meet the guards and learn the rules. One of them told me: "No fighting."

"I'm a lover, not a fighter," I joked. He laughed.

I asked if there had ever been a fight here. "In this unit? No," he said. "No one in this unit has a criminal record."

That's when I started meeting the other women.

That's when I started hearing their stories. And that's when I made a decision: I would never allow myself to feel sorry for my situation again. No matter how hard this was, I had to be grateful. Because every woman I met was in an even more difficult position than mine.

There were around 140 of us in our unit. Many women had lived and worked in the US legally for years but had overstayed their visas—often after reapplying and being denied. They had all been detained without warning.

If someone is a criminal, I agree they should be taken off the streets. But not one of these women had a criminal record. These women acknowledged that they shouldn't have overstayed and took responsibility for their actions. But their frustration wasn't about being held accountable; it was about the endless, bureaucratic limbo they had been trapped in.

The real issue was how long it took to get out of the system, with no clear answers, no timeline, and no way to move forward. Once deported, many have no choice but to abandon everything they own because the cost of shipping their belongings back is too high.

I met a woman who had been on a road trip with her husband. She said they had 10-year work visas. While driving near the San Diego border, they mistakenly got into a lane leading to Mexico. They stopped and told the agent they didn't have their passports on them, expecting to be redirected. Instead, they were detained. They are both pastors.

I met a family of three who had been living in the US for 11 years with work authorizations. They paid taxes and were waiting for their green cards. Every year, the mother had to undergo a background check, but this time, she was told to bring her whole family. When they arrived, they were taken into custody and told their status would now be processed from within the detention center.

Another woman from Canada had been living in the US with her husband who was detained after a traffic stop. She admitted she had overstayed her visa and accepted that she would be deported. But she had been stuck in the system for almost six weeks because she hadn't had her passport. Who runs casual errands with their passport?

One woman had a 10-year visa. When it expired, she moved back to her home country, Venezuela. She admitted she had overstayed by one month before leaving. Later, she returned for a vacation and entered the US without issue. But when she took a domestic flight from Miami to Los Angeles, she was picked up by ICE and detained. She couldn't be deported because Venezuela wasn't accepting deportees. She didn't know when she was getting out.

There was a girl from India who had overstayed her student visa for three days before heading back home. She then came back to the US on a new, valid visa to finish her master's degree and was handed over to ICE due to the three days she had overstayed on her previous visa.

There were women who had been picked up off the street, from outside their workplaces, from their homes. All of these women told me that they had been detained for time spans ranging from a few weeks to 10 months. One woman's daughter was outside the detention center protesting for her release.

That night, the pastor invited me to a service she was holding. A girl who spoke English translated for me as the women took turns sharing their prayers—prayers for their sick parents, for the children they hadn't seen in weeks, for the loved ones they had been torn away from.

Then, unexpectedly, they asked if they could pray for me. I was new here, and they wanted to welcome me. They formed a circle around me, took my hands and prayed. I had never felt so much love, energy and compassion from a group of strangers in my life. Everyone was crying.

At 3am the next day, I was woken up in my cell.

"Pack your bag. You're leaving."

I jolted upright. "I get to go home?"

The officer shrugged. "I don't know where you're going."

Of course. No one ever knew anything.

I grabbed my things and went downstairs, where 10 other women stood in silence, tears streaming down their faces. But these weren't happy tears. That was the moment I learned the term "transferred".

For many of these women, detention centers had become a twisted version of home. They had formed bonds, established routines and found slivers of comfort in the friendships they had built. Now, without warning, they were being torn apart and sent somewhere new. Watching them say goodbye, clinging to each other, was gut-wrenching.

I had no idea what was waiting for me next. In hindsight, that was probably for the best.

Our next stop was Arizona, the San Luis Regional Detention Center. The transfer process lasted 24 hours, a sleepless, grueling ordeal. This time, men were transported with us. Roughly 50 of us were crammed into a prison bus for the next five hours, packed together—women in the front, men in the back. We were bound in chains that wrapped tightly around our waists, with our cuffed hands secured to our bodies and shackles restraining our feet, forcing every movement into a slow, clinking struggle.

When we arrived at our next destination, we were forced to go through the entire intake process all over again, with medical exams, fingerprinting—and pregnancy tests; they lined us up in a filthy cell, squatting over a communal toilet, holding Dixie cups of urine while the nurse dropped pregnancy tests in each of our cups. It was disgusting.

We sat in freezing-cold jail cells for hours, waiting for everyone to be processed. Across the room, one of the women suddenly spotted her husband. They had both been detained and were now seeing each other for the first time in weeks.

The look on her face—pure love, relief and longing—was something I'll never forget.

We were beyond exhausted. I felt like I was hallucinating.

The guard tossed us each a blanket: "Find a bed."

There were no pillows. The room was ice cold, and one blanket wasn't enough. Around me, women lay curled into themselves, heads covered, looking like a room full of corpses.

This place made the last jail feel like the Four Seasons.

I kept telling myself: Do not let this break you.

Thirty of us shared one room. We were given one Styrofoam cup for water and one plastic spoon that we had to reuse for every meal. I eventually had to start trying to eat and, sure enough, I got sick. None of the uniforms fit, and everyone had men's shoes on. The towels they gave us to shower were hand towels. They wouldn't give us more blankets. The fluorescent lights shined on us 24/7.

Everything felt like it was meant to break you. Nothing was explained to us. I wasn't given a phone call. We were locked in a room, no daylight, with no idea when we would get out.

I tried to stay calm as every fiber of my being raged towards panic mode. I didn't know how I would tell Britt where I was. Then, as if sent from God, one of the women showed me a tablet attached to the wall where I could send emails. I only remembered my CEO's email from memory. I typed out a message, praying he would see it.

He responded.

Through him, I was able to connect with Britt. She told me that they were working around the clock trying to get me out. But no one had any answers; the system made it next to impossible. I told her about the conditions in this new place, and that was when we decided to go to the media.

She started working with a reporter and asked whether I would be able to call her so she could loop him in. The international phone account that Britt had previously tried to set up for me wasn't working, so one of the other women offered to let me use her phone account to make the call.

We were all in this together.

With nothing to do in my cell but talk, I made new friends—women who had risked everything for the chance at a better life for themselves and their families.

Through them, I learned the harsh reality of seeking asylum. Showing me their physical scars, they explained how they had paid smugglers anywhere from \$20,000 to \$60,000 to reach the US border, enduring brutal jungles and horrendous conditions.

One woman had been offered asylum in Mexico within two weeks but had been encouraged to keep going to the US. Now, she was stuck, living in a nightmare, separated from her young children for months. She sobbed, telling me how she felt like the worst mother in the world.

Many of these women were highly educated and spoke multiple languages. Yet, they had been advised to pretend they didn't speak English because it would supposedly increase their chances of asylum.

Some believed they were being used as examples, as warnings to others not to try to come.

Women were starting to panic in this new facility, and knowing I was most likely the first person to get out, they wrote letters and messages for me to send to their families.

It felt like we had all been kidnapped, thrown into some sort of sick psychological experiment meant to strip us of every ounce of strength and dignity.

We were from different countries, spoke different languages and practiced different religions. Yet, in this place, none of that mattered. Everyone took care of each other. Everyone shared food. Everyone held each other when someone broke down. Everyone fought to keep each other's hope alive.

I got a message from Britt. My story had started to blow up in the media.

Almost immediately after, I was told I was being released.

My ICE agent, who had never spoken to me, told my lawyer I could have left sooner

if I had signed a withdrawal form, and that they hadn't known I would pay for my own flight home.

From the moment I arrived, I begged every officer I saw to let me pay for my own ticket home. Not a single one of them ever spoke to me about my case.

To put things into perspective: I had a Canadian passport, lawyers, resources, media attention, friends, family and even politicians advocating for me. Yet, I was still detained for nearly two weeks.

Imagine what this system is like for every other person in there.

A small group of us were transferred back to San Diego at 2 am—one last road trip, once again shackled in chains. I was then taken to the airport, where two officers were waiting for me. The media was there, so the officers snuck me in through a side door, trying to avoid anyone seeing me in restraints. I was beyond grateful that, at the very least, I didn't have to walk through the airport in chains.

To my surprise, the officers escorting me were incredibly kind, and even funny. It was the first time I had laughed in weeks.

I asked if I could put my shoelaces back on.

"Yes," one of them said with a grin. "But you better not run."

"Yeah," the other added. "Or we'll have to tackle you in the airport. That'll really make the headlines."

I laughed, then told them I had spent a lot of time observing the guards during my detention and I couldn't believe how often I saw humans treating other humans with such disregard. "But don't worry," I joked. "You two get five stars."

When I finally landed in Canada, my mom and two best friends were waiting for me. So was the media. I spoke to them briefly, numb and delusional from exhaustion.

It was surreal listening to my friends recount everything they had done to get me out: Working with lawyers, reaching out to the media, making endless calls to detention centers, desperately trying to get through to ICE or anyone who could help. They said the entire system felt rigged, designed to make it nearly impossible for anyone to get out.

The reality became clear: ICE detention isn't just a bureaucratic nightmare. It's a business. These facilities are privately owned and run for profit.

Companies like CoreCivic and GEO Group receive government funding based on the number of people they detain, which is why they lobby for stricter immigration policies. It's a lucrative business: CoreCivic made over \$560m from ICE contracts in a single year. In 2024, GEO Group made more than \$763m from ICE contracts.

The more detainees, the more money they make. It stands to reason that these companies have no incentive to release people quickly. What I had experienced was finally starting to make sense.

This is not just my story. It is the story of thousands and thousands of people still trapped in a system that profits from their suffering. I am writing in the hope that someone out there—someone with the power to change any of this—can help do something.

The strength I witnessed in those women, the love they gave despite their suffering, is what gives me faith. Faith that no matter how flawed the system, how cruel the circumstances, humanity will always shine through.

Even in the darkest places, within the most broken systems, humanity persists. Sometimes, it reveals itself in the smallest, most unexpected acts of kindness: A shared meal, a whispered prayer, a hand reaching out in the dark. We are defined by the love

we extend, the courage we summon and the truths we are willing to tell.

That is the end of the article.

The stories continue. A 10-year-old citizen in Texas recovering from brain cancer was detained at a Border Patrol checkpoint and, eventually, the American citizen was deported to Mexico with her undocumented parents, even though they were in need of medical attention for their brain cancer.

Here is the article from NBC: "U.S. citizen child recovering from brain cancer removed to Mexico with undocumented parents."

A family that was deported to Mexico hopes it can find a way to return to the U.S. and ensure their 10-year-old daughter—

My fellow American—

who is a U.S. citizen, can continue her brain cancer treatment.

Immigration authorities removed the girl and four of her American siblings from Texas on Feb. 4, when they deported their undocumented parents.

The family's ordeal began last month, when they were rushing from Rio Grande City, where they lived, to Houston, where their daughter's specialist doctors are based, for an emergency medical checkup.

The parents had done the trip at least five other times in the past, passing through an immigration checkpoint every time without any issues, according to attorney Danny Woodward from the Texas Civil Rights Project, a legal advocacy and litigation organization representing the family. In previous occasions, the parents showed letters from their doctors and lawyers to the officers at the checkpoint to get through.

But in early February, the letters weren't enough. When they stopped at the checkpoint, they were arrested after the parents were unable to show legal immigration documentation. The mother, who spoke exclusively to NBC News, said she tried explaining her daughter's circumstances to the officers, but "they weren't interested in hearing that."

Other than lacking "valid immigration status in the U.S.," the parents have "no criminal history," Woodward said.

Protection, which detained and deported the family, according to the lawyer, said in an e-mail Wednesday:

For privacy reasons, we do not comment on individual cases.

On Thursday, a CBP spokesperson said via email that the reports of the family's situation are inaccurate because "when someone is given expedited removal orders and chooses to disregard them, they will face the consequences" of the process.

They reiterated that they couldn't speak about the specifics of the case for privacy reasons.

The 10-year-old girl was diagnosed with brain cancer last year and underwent surgery to remove the tumor. Doctors "practically gave me no hope of life for her, but thank God she's a miracle," the mother said.

The American citizen is a miracle.

The swelling on the girl's brain is still not fully gone, the mother said, causing difficulties with speech and mobility of the right side of her body. Before the family was removed from the U.S., the girl was routinely checking in with doctors monitoring her recovery, attending rehabilitation therapies and taking medication to prevent convulsions.

"It's a very difficult thing," the mother said. "I don't wish anyone to go through this situation."

"What is happening to this family is an absolute tragedy and is something that is not isolated to just them," said Rochelle Garza, president of the Texas Civil Rights Project.

"This is part of a pattern in practice that we've seen in the Trump administration," Garza said, adding that she has heard of multiple other cases concerning mixed-status families. But for now, this is the only case of this nature the organization has taken on.

The Trump administration's border czar Tom Homan has said, "families can be deported together," regardless of status. Homan said it would be up to the parents to decide whether to depart the U.S. together or leave their children behind.

But undocumented parents of U.S.-born children, if picked up by immigration authorities, face the risk of losing custody of their children. Without a power-of-attorney document or a guardianship outlining who will take care of their children left behind, the children go into the U.S. foster care system, making it harder for the parents to regain custody in the future.

According to the girl's mother, she recalled feeling like she could "not do anything," she said in Spanish, "You're between a rock and a hard place."

NBC News is withholding the name of the mother and the rest of the family members, since they were deported to an area in Mexico that is known for kidnapping U.S. citizens.

In addition to the parents and their 10-year-old sick daughter, four of their other American children, ages 15, 13, 8, and 6, were also in the car when they were detained. Four of the five children were born in the U.S.

According to the mother, the family was taken to a detention center following the arrest, where the mom and daughters were separated from her husband and sons and she realized she wouldn't be taking her daughter to her doctors.

"The fear is horrible. I can't explain it, but it's something frustrating, very tough, something you wouldn't wish on anyone," she said, adding that her sick daughter was laying on a cold floor beneath incandescent lights.

Hours later, the family was placed in a van and dropped on the Mexico side of a Texas bridge. From there, they sought refuge in a nearby shelter for a week.

Mom said that safety concerns keep them up at night and the children haven't been able to go to school.

The 10-year-old daughter and 15-year-old son, who lives with a heart disorder known as Long QT syndrome, which causes irregular heartbeats and can be life-threatening if not treated well, have not received the healthcare they need in Mexico. The teen wears a monitor that tracks his heart rate.

"The authorities have my children's lives in their hands," she said in tears.

The authorities have my children's lives in their hands.

Both parents arrived to the U.S. from Mexico in 2013 and settled in Texas hoping for "a better life for their family," the mother said. She and her husband both worked a string of different jobs to support their six children. The couple also has a 17-year-old son they left behind in Texas following their deportation.

Just two weeks ago, another undocumented mother in California caring for her 21-year-old daughter, a U.S. citizen undergoing treatment for bone cancer, was detained by immigration authorities and later released under humanitarian parole.

"We are calling on the government," Garza said, "to parole the family in, to correct the harm . . . and to not do this to anyone else."

Mr. MURPHY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. I think I need to. I will yield to a question. I will yield to a question while retaining the floor. And I thank my brother, I thank my friend who has now stood with me for almost 11 hours.

Mr. MURPHY. Those are hard stories to read, Senator BOOKER, but I appreciate your showing the coldness of this current administration's immigration policy.

The tragedy to me is that there is an opportunity to fix what is, undoubtedly, a broken immigration system, and yet we are into day 71 and Donald Trump has not proposed to us any proposals to fix the broken system. Instead what he is doing is spending like a drunken sailor on an enforcement system that wastes tens of millions of taxpayer dollars.

You described this harrowing experience that this Canadian woman had, and as I was listening to this 2-week ordeal that she went through, being transported from site to site, being processed and reprocessed, as the top Democrat on the Homeland Security Subcommittee of Appropriations, I am just cataloging in my brain how much money that cost us. Ultimately, this was somebody working in the United States, this was somebody that posed no threat to the U.S. citizens, but we probably spent several million dollars on that 2-week ordeal.

Overall, the Trump administration is going to blow through all of the money allocated to Border Patrol. They are going to have to come back to Congress for a massive additional appropriation, all at the same time that they are shuttering medical research in this country; they are closing down Social Security offices. There are measles outbreaks all across the country. Planes seem to be falling out of the sky as the FAA is enduring layoffs. There are consequences to these spending decisions.

The amount of money that is being spent at the border, much of it wasted in a showy, ineffective response, the consequence of that is that the services that the average, everyday Americans need, like help on their Social Security claims, are being impacted.

But we need to fix the broken immigration system, and we had an opportunity to do that last year when Republicans and Democrats came together and wrote a bipartisan border security bill that, frankly, would have allocated tens of billions of additional dollars that would have fixed our broken asylum system, would have given the President new authorities, and Donald Trump instructed all the Republicans in this Chamber to oppose it.

In the end, I think four Senators, including the author, Senator LANKFORD, supported it, but every other Republican here opposed it. And the reason

Donald Trump told them to oppose it was that he would fix it when he became President. But we are now in day 72, and there has not been a single proposal from Donald Trump to fix the broken immigration system, just a whole bunch of spending, essentially money down the drain because the system itself needs to be reformed.

And so it speaks to my confident belief that Donald Trump does not want to fix our immigration system. He wants to keep this issue open as a sore in our politics. If I were wrong, he would have proposed legislation here to deal with the underlying inefficiency of the system, instead of just throwing money at the problem.

And so we will see what the result of this campaign is. We were told that immigrants to this country represented a very specific national security threat; that we needed to crack down on immigration, including expelling from this country legitimate asylum seekers because that was what was necessary to protect the Nation. Well, we will see what the crime data tells us for the first few months of this administration.

I have a feeling I already know what the story is; crime is not going to have gone down. Why? Because, in fact, whether people want to acknowledge this or not, natural-born American citizens commit crimes at rates higher than first-generation immigrants or people born outside of the United States of America.

But Senator BOOKER, I guess the question I want to ask you is this: I think you and I agree that Americans right, left, and center acknowledge that the immigration system is broken. They didn't love it when they saw thousands of people crossing on an average day. And they know that when it takes 10 years to process an asylum claim, something is wrong, and that it then just provides incentive for people to come here without documentation. But my impression is that the cross section of Americans that believes that the existing immigration system is broken also believes three other things: One, that the way to fix it is to change the laws, and they believe that we have not done our job until we have changed the laws; for instance, building a better asylum system. And once again, not a single proposal from the Trump administration on how to fix our broken immigration system, not a single proposal.

Second, I believe that they understand that immigration is a core strength of this Nation, not a liability, and that if we want to thrive as an economy, we are going to have to bring people to this country legally. But to turn our backs on immigration as a mechanism to grow economically, that is not in line with what Americans believe, even those that think the existing system is broken.

And then, lastly, I just don't believe this country is as mean as Donald Trump thinks it is.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes, yes.

Mr. MURPHY. I get it that everybody wants this Nation to be a nation of laws, but when an American citizen looks at a child with a medical condition, when an American citizen looks at an individual who will face certain death from a drug gang if they stay in their home country, when they look at individuals in war-torn nations overseas, they believe that America is strong enough, is big enough, is generous enough to be able to protect those people from harm. Why? Because that is what America always has been.

And so this idea that President Trump has that Americans are mean and spiteful and don't want to help people just because they were born outside of the United States or their parents were born outside of the United States, I just don't think that is right. It obviously betrays the best traditions of this Nation, but I think it also fundamentally misreads the American people.

So I think people want our immigration to be fixed, the system to be fixed, but I think they want us to do it. They understand the laws are broken. They do not want to abandon America's tradition of bringing people here from all around the world.

They understand that our economy and our economic prosperity is linked to our ability to bring hard-working immigrants to this country, and they are just not as mean as Donald Trump thinks they are.

Mr. BOOKER. Senator, I appreciate your question, but I just have to say this to you. You worked so hard with Senator LANKFORD, and one of the things I have to say—and I hope I don't hurt his politics by telling people how much I love Senator LANKFORD. We disagree fundamentally on a lot of issues, maybe that will help. We both are people, though, of faith. We just recently worked together in a massive—I think there must have been like a thousand people there, maybe 500 at least, at a National Prayer Breakfast event. He is such a man of character. What I like about him, I know his values because every day, he tries to be a good Christian.

(Mrs. MOODY assumed the Chair.)

And this idea of love thy neighbor or you are a stranger in a strange land—I just took a lot of pleasure watching you, my friend, whom I have known for the last 12 years, and sitting down in this honest, sincere negotiation.

Let's be real. Everybody on your side of the aisle didn't agree with you, and everybody, before Trump's involvement, on his side of the aisle didn't agree, but you guys had the makings of a comprehensive bill that would have passed.

I tell you also I came in here in 2013 right after the Gang of 8. They did the same thing. They got the bill out, and it died in the House.

There are people in America, despite Lankford and you—who many people would put on opposite sides of the political spectrum—on these issues, they

agree. Why do they agree, Senator MURPHY? Because our economy is dependent upon immigration.

You want to talk about a conservative-leaning group, Senate moderate Republicans, the national chamber of commerce will tell you that our economy will be crippled if we don't find a way to bring more people in legally to work on work visas.

When I go to the tech community or the biotech community or the AI community or the community that is trying to go forward in quantum computing, all of them are saying this is crazy that we are not allowing the brightest minds on the planet—when they get here and get Ph.D.s and have things half of Congress can't spell, that we drop kick them out of the country.

There are so many points of agreement. Take Dreamers, who people on both sides of the aisle held up as a group of people that are Americans in every way except for a piece of paper.

I could go through everything in the immigration world we need to improve on, including the need to secure our southern border. I listened to you on this section, and I look at you, and I remember your frustration. You are standing up in front of our caucus saying: We are so close.

Mr. MURPHY. Can the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. I just want to drill down on this for a moment. It gets back to a theme that you have been hitting on throughout the evening and early morning, and that is that not everything has to be zero-sum politics. This is part of what is so exhausting about the last 71 days for many, many Americans. I think it is part of why Donald Trump's approval ratings are tanking by the day.

You and I are pugilists when we need to be, right? We fight when we think that there is a worthy fight. That is what this is today—it is a fight. We understand it is a fight for our values. But we don't think everything has to be a fight. We see our jobs as standing up for our convictions but then finding that common ground.

I did not expect to be in that room with Senator LANKFORD. I was surprised, pleasantly, when we came to an agreement. You spent months and months hammering out really difficult criminal justice reform with a colleague of yours that you have equal numbers of disagreements with because we feel like we have a call from our constituents to fight but then find the common ground.

But this administration has zero interest in common ground. Every single day, they wake up thinking only about conflict, thinking only about defeat of their opposition. And they have been frustrated because they have been trying to do a lot of illegal things, and the courts have been telling them no. They are now talking about extraordinary measures, like impeaching judges or defunding the courts.

Instead, they could reach out to Democrats. They could decide to do what every previous President has tried to do, which is, instead of ramming through a one-side-only policy on immigration, for instance, come to people of good will on the opposing party and try to work out a compromise.

This is what exhausts the American people, is this administration's complete and total unwillingness to find common ground on anything. That is not where the center of this country is.

On the issues of immigration, we found common ground last year. It was hard. It did not satisfy everyone. But we have proven that on this issue—it is hot. It is difficult for even family members to talk about it sometimes. Even on this issue of immigration, we can find that common ground.

So we are here—you are here because there is a fight to be waged, but I think we both wish on a litany of these topics that we were instead sitting down with our colleagues. But that is just not in the DNA of this administration. That is part of why this President is becoming more and more unpopular by the day, is because they expect any President—any President—to make at least a minimalist effort to try to reach out and find compromise, and that never happens from the Trump administration.

Mr. BOOKER. I thank you for the question I see in there.

Again, great Presidents have great ideas they bring to Congress, and they fight to pull together and cobble together legislation that will last. The problem we have right now is this whiplash between Trump's Executive orders and Biden's Executive orders and Trump's Executive orders, and it is not solving the problems. We have shown there is enough common ground to do something on it.

I don't want to stick with common ground now, actually, because there are some things in here that are not common ground, like private prisons.

I am one of these folks that don't want to criticize. I have flown out to a private prison down south to get a tour. I met really kind and nice people. But there is something problematic to me about a profit motive for imprisoning, shackling, detaining, and holding people and this combination of that and a corporate reality where you are giving campaign contributions to people that will then turn around and give you government contracts to restrict the liberties of human beings.

The story that I read about this woman feeling like they lied to her lawyer and said if she had only said she could pay for her own flight home, and they were keeping her. Every day they were keeping her, they were getting more money from American taxpayers.

This isn't a system designed for justice. This isn't a system designed for the rights of human beings in our country. This is a system that has every day an incentive to deny liberty, to

hold people. It is wrong. It is wrong. It is broken.

With a President that doesn't care about these things, that is giving greater latitude so that more stories like the Canadian woman's story—it is stunning.

I want to keep moving, though. I just want to talk about children and the way this system is extended to children. Last week, the government canceled a contract to provide legal services to 26,000 unaccompanied immigrant children.

Remember what Anton Scalia said about due process in his strict interpretations of the literal writings of our Founders.

So 26,000 unaccompanied migrant children no longer have legal representation. We started on that idea. We started on that idea. We started on the idea—the 15th and 14th Amendment—that “no one shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process,” and our country has now rolled back.

Trump got rid of a policy that prevented ICE from arresting kids at schools and people from their places of worship. Now, every day, families face the impossible choice of whether to send a kid to school and risk permanent separation from their families.

There is a story from New Jersey. Recently when I was home in Newark, NJ, a woman in my neighborhood came up to me to tell me a heartbreaking story. One morning, she was on her way to walk to school, and a mom of other children—I won't make this anonymous. One of my closest friends—she is like a sister to me. She lives in The Ironbound in Newark. She was very emotional because her neighbors were so terrified that they came to her and asked her to walk their children to school. They were American children.

There are so many teachers and school administrators who are speaking out now that they have been ordered that they must allow ICE to enter their schools.

Trump has plans to revoke temporary protected status protection for hundreds of thousands of people from various countries—from Venezuela to Haiti—paving the way for those deportations. We know who they are. He has done this despite the State Department maintaining a “Level 4: Do Not Travel” warning for Haiti and Venezuela due to widespread violence, danger, sexual assault, kidnappings, and more.

He claims that he is tough on crime because he wants to go after child sexual abusers, but you are sending children running into schools and churches and sending them back to environments that are known for sexual assaults on young girls.

The Department of Justice Office of Civil Rights recently dropped its case that it filed against Southwest Key, the Nation's largest provider of housing for migrant children, in which the DOJ alleged sexual abuse and neglect perpetrated against undocumented

children in Federal custody. It was a case DOJ brought against this company, which housed migrant children, because of alleged sexual abuse.

What did our government do under Trump? They dropped charges. They dropped charges. Why? Why? Children being sexually assaulted—it is not worth an investigation? Is it because the administration thinks that pursuing the lawsuit and holding perpetrators accountable will somehow interfere with their immigration agenda? They literally let alleged sex abusers go free with no explanation—the hypocrisy.

Family detentions have restarted. They failed in the past to meet basic child welfare standards and exposed children to trauma. The President's own Department of Homeland Security concluded in 2018 that family detention centers posed a high risk of harm to children and families. Despite his own Department of Homeland Security back in 2018 saying that, they have restarted.

One of the points I want to make is on crime. I was a mayor. The No. 1 issue my residents were concerned about was fighting crime, fighting crime, fighting crime.

I went back to Newark recently for a horrible, tragic death of a police officer by a 14-year-old with a ghost gun. It was horrible. The sendoff—hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of police officers from all over our State, from New York. This police officer was murdered by a 14-year-old. I still pray for his family, his mom.

As I was standing there looking at this parade of police officers who were waiting for the casket, I had police officers come to me and complain that they are having a harder and harder time in New Jersey solving crimes because now victims of crime—victims of sexual assault, victims of robbery—who happen to be undocumented are afraid to go and talk to local police because of all this rhetoric that is creating the fear that they will be turned over to ICE.

Imagine, in our country there are people out there who are sexually assaulting people but who are getting away with it because they are targeting immigrants. And if you don't think that hurts Americans' safety, you are wrong.

When you are afraid to go and talk to police officers to report crimes, when you are subverting people's constitutional rights and incarcerating people in foreign prisons with no criminal records, it does harm to children.

We talked about all of the diverting of law enforcement resources away from investigating national security threats, terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal arms exports, financial crimes, and sex crimes. It is taking law enforcement away from investigating those crimes and forcing all Federal law enforcement Agencies to enforce boat-level immigration crimes or, I should say, un-

documented people with no criminal activity beyond their being in our country.

Reuters wrote about this misguided redirection of Federal resources. I will read their article:

Federal agents who usually hunt down child abusers are now cracking down on immigrants who live in the U.S. legally.

Homeland Security investigators who specialize in money laundering are raiding restaurants and other small businesses, looking for immigrants who aren't authorized to work.

Agents who pursue drug traffickers and tax fraud are being reassigned to enforce immigration law.

As U.S. President Donald Trump pledges to deport "millions and millions" of "criminal aliens," thousands of federal law enforcement officers from multiple federal agencies are being enlisted to take on new work as immigration enforcers, pulling crime fighting resources away from other areas—from drug trafficking and terrorism and sexual abuse and fraud.

This account of Trump's push to reorganize federal law enforcement—the most significant since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks—is based on interviews with more than 20 current and former federal agents, attorneys, and other federal officials. Most had first-hand knowledge of the changes. Nearly all spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss their work.

"I do not recall ever seeing this wide spectrum of federal government resources all being turned toward immigration enforcement," said Theresa Cardinal Brown, the former Homeland Security official who has served in both Republican and Democratic administrations. "When you are telling agencies to stop what you are doing and do this now, whatever else they were doing takes a back seat."

In response to questions from Reuters, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said the U.S. Government is mobilizing federal and state law enforcement to find, arrest, and deport illegal aliens. The [FBI] declined to respond to questions about its staffing. In a statement, the FBI said it is "protecting the U.S. from many threats."

The Trump administration has offered no comprehensive accounting of the revamp. But it echoes the aftermath of the 2001 attacks, when Congress created the Department of Homeland Security and pulled together 169,000 federal employees from other agencies and refocused the FBI on battling terrorism.

Trump's hardline approach to deporting immigrants has intensified America's already stark partisan divide. The U.S. Senate's No. 2 Democrat, Dick Durbin, described the crackdown as a "wasteful, misguided diversion of resources". . . . It is "making America less safe" by drawing agents and officials away from fighting corporate fraud, terrorism, child sexual exploitation, and other crimes.

The focus on immigration is drawing significant resources from other crime-fighting departments, according to the more than 20 sources who spoke.

Until January, pursuing immigrants living in the country illegally was largely the job of two agencies: Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, and Customs and Border Protection, with a combined staff of 80,000. Other Departments spent . . . [on crime].

In Detroit—where immigration prosecutions have been rare—the number of people charged with immigration offenses rose from 2 in February . . . to 19 last month.

Case managements records from the Justice Department show that fewer than 1% of the cases brought to prosecutors by the DEA and ATF over the past decade involve allegations that someone had violated immigration law.

Since January, however, DEA agents have been ordered to reopen cases involving arrests up to five years old, where prosecutors have declined to bring charges.

As Trump and billionaire Elon Musk flash the size of the Federal Government bureaucracy, jobs that deal with immigration enforcement appear largely exempt.

In a January 31 email to ICE employees, a human resources official told them they wouldn't be eligible for retirement buyouts offered to some 2.3 million Federal workers. "All ICE positions are excluded," said the previously unreported email.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, will the Senator yield for a question.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WELCH. Thank you.

Senator, I have been listening to many of your hours of speech. You are talking about immigration now, and I have another question about the immigration policy.

You know, I think all of us understand that it is absolutely essential that our country secure its borders, and, from time to time, the country forgets that. But I think we have had this debate about immigration that has been going on for several years.

I don't know if the Senator had an opportunity to address the opportunity we had in the Senate when, last year, there was a realization on the part of both the Republicans and Democrats that the only way we were going to get a secure border and a beneficial, sensible immigration policy was to work together. I know the Senator was watching that very carefully when we had the terrific work of Senator LANKFORD from Oklahoma, Senator MURPHY from Connecticut, and Senator Sinema, of course, from Arizona.

Despite the enormous political tension that surrounds the immigration issue, but for understandable reasons, the three of them worked very hard and came together for a tri-partisan proposal, in effect—Senator Sinema, of course, being the Independent, who always played a constructive role in trying to bring the parties together. What was included in that legislation was a major commitment—embraced by Senator MURPHY on behalf of the Democrats—for border security. There was an acknowledgment that we have to control our borders. It is really that simple.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes.

Mr. WELCH. But when you control your borders, you also have the opportunity to have an immigration policy that the Congress and the President think will benefit the American people. That benefits us, of course, if there is security at the border, but it also benefits us if we have legal immigration that is controlled by the American people.

Of course, you know, I have noticed that Elon Musk, who is against immigration and is for everything that

President Trump is for—he likes having very highly educated computer people who can help him go from very rich to even richer. So he carves out an exception for people who will be beneficial and helpful to him in his various enterprises.

But, you know, we have got in Vermont a lot of dairy farms, and we have a tourist industry, and we have a really hard time filling those jobs. So legal immigration can really be helpful and constructive and beneficial to the people of the State of Vermont.

I know, in talking to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, many of us in our States have tourist industries, and we have agricultural enterprises, just to mention two, where the reality is we don't have the number of people we need to fill those jobs. You know, it is not just a matter of paying more, because I do think we have to be very mindful that we want to do every single thing we can to help elevate the wages of American workers.

And, by the way, this is a little bit of an aside. Why in the world haven't we raised the minimum wage?

I mean, I know, Senator, you are for that, and I certainly am. But it astonishes me that we still have it at—what is it?—\$7 or \$7.50? I mean, it is unbelievable what the minimum wage is. A lot of States have raised it. Vermont certainly has.

But we, on immigration, had the opportunity and the bill and the will to make enormous progress so that we would have an immigration policy that secured the border, had the validation of bipartisan majorities in the House and in the Senate, would have also addressed the issues about legal immigration that would help us strengthen our economy, and also would have included a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers—folks who were brought here by their parents when they were 4 or 5 or 6 years old and whose only country they know is the United States itself. You know, my understanding from talking to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is that there is an enormous amount of respect for many of these Dreamers, many of whom have been heroes for us in the military.

So this is not a Republican—in my view, it is not a Republican-Democratic situation. It is a desire on the part of almost everyone in this body to accommodate the reality of a child's being brought here by his parents, going to school, getting an education, serving his country—firefighters, marines, teachers—doing all these things that are really helpful to our country, and are here through absolutely no fault of their own. If we were to require them to be deported—and that is an effort that the current administration is making—you literally would be taking people who might be 30 or 40 years old now, who have families, and send them back to the country from which their parents brought them. And they don't even speak the language, and, you know, that obviously makes no sense.

When I talk to Vermonters who have very, very strong views of having a strong border and I ask them about this situation, they think: Wait a minute. Well, that is different. You know, that is a person who lives here. That is like my neighbor.

So I was so disappointed when we were on the cusp of being able to get this legislation passed when then-Candidate Trump, in his candid way, said, "Kill it," and he was candid about why. It would "give the Democrats a win."

I never saw this as a win for Democrats. You know, I saw this as a win for America.

The reality is that, when we have to do really hard things here—and we are not doing hard things these days, but when we are trying to do hard things that are really important for the American people—my experience is you really do have to get to a bipartisan place because, you know, we have lost elections, and we lost the last one, and that is on us. It is not on the voters. They made a decision. That is their right to do, and we have to learn, and we have to listen. But when we were listening and hearing loud and clear from the American people that we want a secure border and then we worked with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to get a secure border, why in the world would the leader of the party kill it? Why? I mean, we know the reason. He thought it was good politics.

But this is not about what is good partisan politics. It is about what is good policy that is going to help the American people.

So among the many things you are focusing on, of course, is this question of immigration, and this is incredibly important. But I wanted to be clear that I, as one Member of the U.S. Senate, am absolutely all in for the immigration reform that we need. And that is a secure border. That is legal immigration as we determine the type of immigration that would be beneficial to the American people and sustainable, and it also includes a pathway to citizenship for these children who, in many cases, were brought here by their parents, who had no agency, no involvement whatsoever in the decision to come here, how they got here.

Pardon me. For those of us who don't stay up all night, some of us use alarms to wake up. So pardon me for being here earlier than I thought I would be here. And you are here maybe later than you thought.

But you know, it is such a privilege for you, and it is such a privilege for me. It is such a privilege for the other 98 citizens of this country who serve with us in the U.S. Senate that any chance we get—any chance we get—to do something that is helpful to the people we represent, don't we want to grab it? Don't we want to do it?

And does it matter if our name lives in memory that we were here? It doesn't. What matters is what we do here and whether, when we leave, we

can look back and have the satisfaction of knowing we gave it our best.

There is enormous pressure on folks in this job from the crosscurrents of the political world that we live in. And all of us are fallible. All of us have plenty of opportunity to get it wrong, and we do. But what I have seen in the people I have admired on both sides of the aisle—and I think of Senator McCain, whom Senator MURPHY worked with so much. There was a heart and soul to that man, and it was the heart and soul and his spirit that guided him.

And when I think about immigration, and we are talking about how tough it is, he worked together with the so-called Gang of 8 to come up with a reform that this Senate passed years ago.

I was in the House then, and I remember being so excited—so excited—when I heard that the Senate had actually come up with a proposal that just made sense. It wasn't perfect. What is? You know, Senate to Earth: What is perfect? We do the best we can, but that is about it.

But do you know what? When I say "that is about it," that is what life is. Do your best and then move on.

By the way, that is one of the reasons why I think, Senator, the bipartisanship, which we don't have now at all, but it has to ultimately—we have to have enough humility to understand that neither side has the answers. And where we try in earnest to come up with the best solution we can at the moment, where we listen to each other, what happens is that if we didn't get it fully right—and we never will—we understand that we have an opportunity to fix it and make it better based on that experience.

When there is just our way or the highway, there is no resolution and no progress. No. 1, you don't get the bill passed, as we saw with the immigration bill. Then, No. 2, if you get it passed, the other side just tries to tear it apart and repeal it as opposed to improve it.

Every single one of us knows that the American people want progress. But when what we are talking about is something that is hard—and it truly is hard, the issue of immigration—we are talking about something that is hard politically, that spirit of wanting to get to a solution, that was what animated the work of Senator LANKFORD, Senator MURPHY, and Senator Sinema. They wanted to get to a solution, even though they had significantly different points of view going in on what was the right outcome. But they wanted to get to a solution where they represented the points of view of the disparate views of our caucus, and they came up with a compromise that, by all accounts, would be such a better place for us to be now than what we are in: no progress.

We haven't been able to act on that immigration bill since the Senate acted, with the leadership of Senator McCain and others.

I was mentioning how excited I was. I was in the House at the time, and I was so excited that this bill came over. You know, Vermonters were asking me all the time: PETER, we have got to do something about our borders. We have got to do something to make sure our farmers don't fear having their farms raided and them not being able to milk their cows. It is that essential, right? And I am talking about a lot of pretty conservative people, politically, who politically sometimes agree with me, sometimes don't. But what was so exciting to me was that on the cusp of this coming to the House, I was thinking: I am going to have a chance to vote for secure immigration, securing our borders, a rational immigration plan, and I am going to be able to give fairness to the Dreamers. I was so excited about that.

Then what happened is it was announced that the House would not even take up the bill. Why? It was the same reason that then-Candidate Trump proposed to his colleagues or to his party members in the Senate: Kill it. And why was that?

Really, in all candor, it is the most cynical of all reasons. Sometimes people in politics prefer to have the issues that they can fight about rather than use the responsibility and opportunity they have to solve the problem.

That is pretty much what happened with that. And here we are, and we are seeing it again.

You know, there is another thing that is happening with the immigration policies of the current administration. There is a lot of cruelty, this part of it. Yes, we have to have a secure border. Yes, criminals who came here illegally should be deported. But should the consensus that we have about a secure border, about the legitimacy of deporting criminals who are here illegally be used to justify a wholesale roundup, where the people who are rounded up are almost randomly picked up on the basis of good information, but it is clear in this roundup, where so many people were flown to the jails in El Salvador, that the minimal amount of due process, which is inquiry into who is this person, where are they from, does this tattoo mean they are in a gang or is that a tattoo of Mom—are we a society where we don't provide that minimal inquiry that is called due process, that our country was founded on? It appears, in many cases, we haven't done that.

Then, what we are seeing also is that a number of people are being rounded up who are here legally. They are here on a student visa, and they published an opinion in a school newspaper expressing their point of view about the suffering in the Middle East. This country, of course, is founded, among other things, on the First Amendment right to free speech. It is a pretty astonishing thing that people who express that, who are here legally, by the way—legally, legally, legally. I want to emphasize that—are suddenly con-

fronted by people who are essentially bearing masks, put in handcuffs, taken away, and then put in a jail at some unknown place until some maybe days later when you find out where they are. How does that solve the border crisis? How does that protect the liberties that have been the hallmark of the United States of America since the Constitution?

It is cruel to have a person who essentially “disappears.” That is the term I know Senator MURPHY used once and, I think, unfortunately, accurately.

We have a challenge. It is really not who wins this vote, who wins that vote. And it is not even who is in the majority and who is in the minority because this country only works and this Senate only works when whatever your political views are, you approach the problems that America has from the perspective of your obligation as a U.S. Senator to make progress, to make it better.

I was in the State senate for 13 years. I am not going to say my life has been downhill since then, but what I so appreciated about the Vermont Senate—and I learned, working with other people, that “bipartisan” doesn't have a meaning almost now because it is like you have got to be on one side or the other.

But I remember when I first went to the State senate, Senator BOOKER, I won an election that was an upset. So I was feeling pretty good about myself. When I got there, it was a majority in the Republican Party, and I was ready to cause trouble—not necessarily in the John Lewis good way. It might have been more of a PETER WELCH ego way. I had a lot to learn.

What every member who was showing up—and these two Republican Senators who were just really icons for me in my life, as it turns out, they and the Lieutenant Governor made decisions about who would be on what committees. And I really wanted to be on the Finance Committee, but that is not a committee you get on when you just show up and you have won an election and you are acting like you are more important than you are. They put me on the Finance Committee, and I said: I am doomed.

The reason is, I know I had to cooperate. They had been so good to me and so generous. They gave me a seat at the table. It was such a thrill for me to be able to actually sit at the table with these people whom I held in such high regard and who knew so much more than me. But they invited me in. They didn't push me aside just because I had different points views and was from a different party.

A few years later, I became Senate president, so I had a lot to do with who was on what committees. And I remembered I started then the process that we still do in Vermont, and I appointed a number of Republicans to chair committees.

I was in the Senate a second time with the now-Governor of Vermont,

Phil Scott, and he became the chair of the Institutions Committee. That is a big deal in Vermont. When I tell folks we did that in Vermont, where sometimes you would appoint somebody who is from the other party, they want me to have a mental status exam around here. You know, you just don't that kind of thing.

What I do know and what I do see is that there are a lot of people here who do have that—I will call it the Murphy-Lankford-Sinema attitude: Let's solve the problem. Let's make progress. Let's find a way where we can move ahead.

You are talking about immigration, which because we have been going around and around on this for so long without making progress, it is almost creating this cul-de-sac or this sink-hole where people think it is pointless; why even talk about it; why try to solve it.

It can't be done. But we know it can be done because we are the people here, 100 of us, that actually have the ability to do it. And I would say we have the responsibility to do it because it is a serious issue that faces the American people, and they are entitled to the safety of a secure border. The Dreamers are entitled to some justice and respect for the commitment they have made to be fully participating citizens here in the United States.

So I just applaud the efforts of my colleagues who, despite all of the outside noise, do want to make some progress. When we don't make progress, we descend into a bad place.

You know, yes, deport a criminal. Our people are entitled to safety. People are not entitled to come here illegally, and people who are illegally here certainly are not entitled to commit any crimes.

But when we go round and round and just use the challenge of immigration reform as a political cudgel, we end up going into some pretty dark places. And that is where we are heading now, where a person gets rounded up who is legally here because the administration doesn't like the opinion they expressed. It is not that their opinion was necessarily subversive. It is not even wrong; it is debatable. You and I would have an opportunity to debate, you know, what should be our policy in the Middle East, what should be our policy on immigration.

But the administration decides: That speech, I don't like. Arrest that person. Disappear that person.

And then we get into debates that are really not about making progress but mutual recrimination.

So I am just very delighted that you are focusing a good part of your effort here on the vital question of immigration.

I do hope—I haven't been watching everything, but if it is OK, I just want to direct your attention to these tariffs that are happening a little bit. I know you are going to have an opportunity to talk about a fair number of things;

you already have. But I have never seen anything so dumb and reckless as these tariffs on Canada.

We have a library in Newport, VT—Derby Line, actually—the Haskell Free Library. And half of it is in Vermont, and half of it is in Canada. Is that cool or what? Canadians come in what I call the backdoor but they call the front door, and we come in the front door which they call the backdoor, and we read books together. We have had this library for decades.

We had a roundtable up on the Canada-Vermont border, and the Member of Parliament from Stanstead, which is the town next to Newport, Madam Bibeau, was with us. And we were with some folks who ran businesses on the Vermont side and on the Canadian side and some of whom had operations on both sides. Most of these were family businesses; some were very large, some were small. They ranged from, like, farmers on the Vermont side, who got a lot of their fertilizer from Canada. And that is true, by the way, all across the northern border. It can be Minnesota. It can be Idaho. So many of our farmers all along the Canadian border have cross-relationships with Canada. They get their fertilizer. It is going to cost 25 percent more.

We all know how hard our farmers work. Nobody works harder. The margins of what they make are tiny. And you add a 25-percent tariff, and these people are just—they don't know what is going to happen.

Our maple syrup makers, back and forth. We get a lot of syrup from Canada and blend it and make it into products with Vermont syrup. Canada is the biggest producer of the second best maple syrup in the world. Vermont is the biggest producer of the best maple syrup in the world—in the United States. But the equipment that our sugar makers use is largely manufactured in Canada. A 25-percent tariff on that, that is going to hammer the Vermont maple producers. Again, they operate on a small margin.

A lot of these farms, as you know, and the sugar producers—or, we have got a family company up there, a second generation, that makes high-quality furniture—these are family businesses, and they have tight margins. They are competing. They are really working hard. The Northeast Kingdom is really a pretty low-income part of Vermont, with wonderful, incredibly hard-working people who are very proud of where they live and who they are and who their neighbors are.

They are asking really tough questions about how they can make it and whether they can stay in business. And this is not the same as immigration, but there is an element here that is the same as immigration.

Shouldn't any policy that we pursue start with the premise that we will do no harm? So it might be a policy the Presiding Officer is advocating. And I know when the Presiding Officer served in your previous job, you would be

wanting to make certain that what you did, did no harm. In fact, you would be insisting that it did some good.

And my question with the tariffs is whether the administration is starting out from the premise that I think all of us should start with: Yeah, we may have an idea. We hope it might work. But we have to make sure it does no harm.

Mr. BOOKER. I was going to ask a question. Did the Senator finish his question?

Mr. WELCH. That is a long question, and I am waiting for a long answer.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to first start by saying that the Senator has a reputation around this place; that there is a deep, penetrating goodness that is in you. I love to watch my Senate colleagues when other people are not—it is a habit of mine—because I think what you do when no one is watching is really telling. There is a belief I have that someone who is nice to you but not nice to the waiter is not a nice person.

And we have a body full of people that show some deep, decent goodness. You are one of those people. And what I love about watching you is that it could be the farthest ideological person away from you, and you just have this—like, you look at people like you see their divinity, whether it is the person at the highest position, a leader of the Senate on either side, or someone who holds the door.

What I love about you is, when I watch you, you are one of the Senators—some people just keep to their side of the aisle—I always look up, and I find you over there talking to somebody. And I just rely on that decency in you as a friend, and I have come to love you like a brother, and I want to thank you for being here before your alarm in the morning goes off. It really touches me.

And I don't know if you remember this, but about 12 hours ago, you sat right here and you embraced me in a hug, and I leaned on that hug because I wasn't sure that I would even make it 12 hours. I take strength from you, my friend. And I take strength from you to hold to my kindness, to look for it everywhere.

This is a story I don't think I have ever shared with you, but it speaks to how we get things done and how we should get things done.

When I first got to the U.S. Senate, my mentor, Bill Bradley, gave me three real lessons for me to learn. I think I have obeyed two out of the three. One was to know the rules of procedure really well. That is the one I have probably failed. I am still learning things, 13 years into this, about the rules of procedure. The second one was become a specialist in some areas; don't be a mile wide and an inch deep. I feel like I have done a pretty good job on that.

But the one that he told me that was most fruitful—I already mentioned one of the benefits I had in doing this with

John McCain earlier in this 12 hours—he commanded me to go and meet with all your Republican colleagues; take them out to dinner, sit with them for lunch, whomever they are.

I went out to dinner with TED CRUZ. It was hard—to find a restaurant—because I am a vegan and TED CRUZ is from Texas. But I still remember that we went out and how people were sort of shocked just to see two human beings breaking bread.

But the story I want to tell my friend about is when I went to see Jim Inhofe, a Republican from the same State as Lankford. And I couldn't get him to meet with me. I couldn't get on his schedule.

And I found out that he had Bible study in his hideaway, and so I go up to his hideaway for Bible study. THUNE was there. And we all have implicit biases. We all have implicit biases. My implicit bias was that I did not expect of this older, conservative man that I would walk in and see on his mantle this beautiful picture, centered, of him hugging a little Black girl. I am embarrassed by that, that it so surprised me.

And I—especially in those days, I didn't talk to, like, the senior giants in the Senate. I didn't call them by their first names. I still have a problem calling Senator DURBIN by his first name, for example. He is a lion of the Senate, in my opinion, and one of the kindest people to me since I have been here.

So I go to him—I go to Jim Inhofe. I go, “Mr. Chairman, sir,” and I look at the picture and I go, “Who dat?”

And he smiles and chuckles, and then he tells me the most beautiful story of his family adopting this little Black girl out of some of the most terrible circumstances. And I was so moved.

And thinking about my friend Bill Bradley, I would have never known this incredibly beautiful thing about someone who is my—ideologically, we disagreed on so many things, but knowing this personal moment, it created this thread between us—not a rope, not a cord, but a thread—that connected me to him, and it created a deeper affection.

So fast-forward many months in this body, and there is a big education bill, which CHRIS MURPHY referenced earlier. A big education bill was going through the Senate because No Child Left Behind—we were going back the other way. Senator DURBIN has told me about this pendulum that sometimes swings and swings back in its place. And it was a deal.

Lamar Alexander was in the well of the Senate. He was the manager of the bill. And there were no amendments allowed. No amendments allowed. Of course, I am sitting back here. This is where I sat. And you talk about egos. My ego—I had this great amendment, and I was frustrated that they were having this rule—no amendments—but I have a great amendment to do something about homeless and foster children, who have the worst educational

outcomes, and I thought I had a modest amendment to try to make a difference for American children who are in foster care or that were homeless.

And I am frustrated. I am sitting back here, something that I dream of doing again one day—sitting—and just kind of upset. And then I see, walking through those doors, Senator Jim Inhofe, and he walks to the well kind of talking. And I remember the story he told me about this little Black girl in his family, and something tells me to get up. And I walk into the well, down these steps, and I say to him, “Mr. Chairman, sir, I know how much you care for children in tough circumstances. I have an amendment.”

And I explained my amendment to him, and he looked at me and gave me the Senate version of no, which is, “I will think about it.”

And I got frustrated, and I said, “Thank you, sir, for considering it,” and I walked back and I sat down right here. And then when I picked my head up, he is marching into our side—like you do on the other side—like his GPS coordinates were off. He marches up to me and just sort of grunts at me, “I’m in,” and then turns around and starts walking away from me.

I step up and I say, “Wait. Excuse me. What do you mean?”

He goes, “CORY, I am going to co-sponsor your amendment.” And I was so happy.

And now I go over to Senator GRASSLEY and say the same thing to him—a relationship that, thanks to DICK DURBIN, I really bonded; I have a sweet relationship with him even though, again, we disagree on so much. He doesn’t even make me wait. He looks at me, and he goes, “You got Inhofe?” And he signs on my amendment.

(Mr. YOUNG assumed the Chair.)

By the time I go to Lamar Alexander, I look up and I am like, I got a full house. Sorry, I got no other Democrats, but I got all these Republicans. He looks at me, and he laughs. He goes “Really?” and he puts the amendment on the bill. It is the law of the land right now.

So what you said in the beginning of your long windup question, my dear friend, my dear brother, is how real change is made.

That man, DICK DURBIN, when I first got to the Senate, he knew how much I cared about criminal justice reform. He brought me to the table. I started working—as I presided, I started working in conversations with MIKE LEE, in conversations with CHUCK GRASSLEY. We cobbled together a bill. It wasn’t done by Executive fiat; it was done in the Senate—87 votes. It is the law of the land. Thousands have been liberated from unjust incarceration.

So my point to the Senator is that his spirit is so right, is so true about what it takes to make real change, but the President we have right now doesn’t seem to be coming to this body with any kind of bold, bipartisan legislation to solve the problems of our Na-

tion, to cobble together the common ground of this country on immigration. No. He is not acting like that. He is using language like “Presidential primacy.” He is defending his corrupt practices in immigration by saying things like “Presidential primacy.” He is invoking the Alien Enemies Act. He is invoking the Alien Enemies Act—an act from the 1700s—to deny due process, and Antonin Scalia, a textualist, said that whether you are born in this country or not, you have due process here.

The Constitution states only one thing twice: Both the 5th and the 14th Amendments say that no one—not no citizen—no one shall be deprived of liberty or property without due process of law. Yet this President is disappearing people and, as we documented here, disappearing the wrong people; as we documented here, unjustly detaining Americans, separating families—all while pushing his agenda and doing things that the values of people on both sides of this aisle don’t believe in, like stopping the investigation of children for alleged sexual molestation. This is wrong.

I sat down with some of the advocates who were telling me and who are trying to fight to stop the law from being broken, and they scared me, DICK DURBIN, because they said what I said on this floor: If someone is willing to violate the Constitution for some, it endangers the constitutional rights for us all. Do not think this is, oh, those people. If they are violating the rights of some, it is a threat to the rights of all.

I am standing here because of a national crisis that is growing. We talked about Social Security. We talked about healthcare. We talked education. This is a crisis for us.

This is what the person said. They talked about the Insurrection Act. They have been hearing people in the administration talk about the Insurrection Act.

Every person in this Congress and across this country wants a safe and secure border, but scapegoating immigrants to erode basic constitutional freedoms does not make America safer, does not make our communities safer, does not reform our immigration system like we should be doing in a bipartisan manner like LANKFORD and MURPHY. It does not stop our longstanding problems in our agricultural industry and our tech industry.

History has shown that when due process and basic constitutional rights are eroded for some people, it does not stop. It continues to erode. The shoreline that kept you safe will shrink until it reaches you.

I am reminded of German Pastor Martin Niemöller’s quote about fascism in Germany:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

Well, everything that has happened in the last few months contradicts American values, shared values. I am most concerned about what this signals for the future and the potential indication of this President of the Insurrection Act.

Some of our country’s most prominent lawyers have warned that the invocation of these two antiquated laws—the Alien Enemies Act and the Insurrection Act—may result in the true erosion of our constitutional rights.

Trump’s recent indication of the Alien Enemies Act is the first step to securing people without due process, which Justice Scalia said is wrong, and then on the first day in office, Trump directed the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security—Trump directed them to initiate a 90-day review to determine whether the President should invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807. That 90-review—when do the 90 days come up, folks? This month. In 19 days. April 20.

The President of the United States has already invoked a 1780-something law and also asked his immigration folks, his homeland security folks, to do a 90-day review about the Insurrection Act of 1807.

Now, there are probably people watching and saying: What is the Insurrection Act? I had to look up what the Alien Enemies Act was. So let me tell folks what the Insurrection Act that our President on his first day in office—of all the things a President has to do, he turned to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security to initiate a 90-day review of the Insurrection Act.

America, what is the Insurrection Act of 1807? It is among the President’s most powerful authorities. He can deploy the U.S. Armed Forces and militia during a national emergency. He can declare a national emergency.

This President has already wrongfully declared national emergencies. He declared a national emergency on energy. Senator Kaine talked about the outrageousness of somebody declaring a national emergency on energy when we are at the highest level of petrol chemical extraction in our country’s history. Until he started rolling back what we were doing on wind and solar, we had an all-of-the-above strategy. Nobody “drill baby drilled” more than Joe Biden.

The Insurrection Act gives the ability of the President to declare a national emergency to suppress insurrections, to quell civil unrest or domestic violence, and to enforce the law when he believes it is being obstructed.

When can the President invoke the Insurrection Act? Well, nothing in the text of the law defines insurrection, rebellion, or domestic violence. Those are prerequisites for deployment, but they don’t define those things.

One of Trump's first Executive orders signed the evening he took office on January 20 was titled "Declaring a National Emergency at the Southern Border of the United States." In that order, he said "America's sovereignty is under attack." He has already declared a national emergency.

Neither Congress nor the courts played a role in deciding what constitutes an obstruction or a rebellion. If Trump does unlawfully invoke the Insurrection Act, he can conceivably use our military to carry out his deportation agenda within our country's borders, all without any due process or opportunity to prove that their presence in the U.S. is lawful or even that they are a citizen.

Trump himself said he wants to deport American citizens to foreign countries. Trump himself has said: I want to deport American citizens to foreign countries.

On February 4, he said:

I am just saying if we had a legal right to do it, I would do it in a heartbeat. I don't know if we do or not. We are looking at it right now.

This is what he has asked his Secretary of Defense and his Secretary of Homeland Security to say: Can I invoke the Insurrection Act?

So don't be mistaken. This is not just about immigrants. This is not just denying immigrants the due process that Antonin Scalia said that immigrants have a right to so you don't disappear the wrong people like the Trump administration has done, that you don't wildly disagree with what a citizen is saying and use that as a pretext to disappear them.

He is creating the pretext to invoke that 1807 law, the Insurrection Act, and if he does that, when they came for the immigrants and denied them due process, he is trying to get us to surrender our commitment to the constitutional guarantees that Americans have. He has said he would invoke—he would deport Americans if he could.

When the President denies due process to some in America, it threatens the due process of all.

Let's see what happens on April 20 if this President, who has already invoked the Alien Enemies Act, follows through and invokes the Insurrection Act. But why wait until April 20? Raise your voice now. Stand up now. Do something now. Cause some good trouble now. Let this President know that if he does ever do that, there will be a rising up of people's voices, a rising up of good trouble, as John Lewis would say, to say: Not in my country. This is unacceptable.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. To Senator DICK DURBIN, to somebody who has been my mentor and friend, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Thank you. I first want to acknowledge this extraordinary moment in the history of the Senate. I believe you have been holding the floor

now for more than 10 hours, and perhaps we will go on even longer.

You have been joined by your colleague and friend Senator MURPHY of Connecticut. I am sorry to take the early morning shift, but I didn't want to miss this moment in history, not just for the historic nature of it but for the substance of it as well.

I just remind my colleague and fellow member of the Senate Judiciary Committee that it was only maybe 3, maybe 4 weeks ago that we had witnesses before the Judiciary Committee, and I asked a question. One of them is pending on the calendar, the Executive Calendar, on the floor. His name is Dean Sauer of Missouri. He is seeking the position of Solicitor General of the United States. Along with him was the lady aspiring to be the Assistant Deputy Attorney General for Civil Rights, Harmeet Dhillon, and Aaron Reitz, who has been approved by the Senate for a legal policy position.

The questioning went to the basics of our Constitution, which you have noted here today; that is, what is the check and balance on a President? What is the accountability of a President under the Constitution?

As I read it—and I don't profess to be expert; I am still learning—as I read it, the accountability of the President is in article II—in article III, I am sorry, article III, the judiciary.

Ultimately, the President can be held accountable by impeachment in Congress or by decision of the court. Some of the orders that he is promulgating are inconsistent with law and the Constitution.

The question that was asked of the witnesses who are seeking positions in the Department of Justice: Can a public official defy a court order? It seems so fundamental and basic. The answer is no, of course, but these three witnesses all equivocated in their own ways, which raises a question: If this President is not held accountable by court order, what, then, can control a President who misuses their office, to the detriment of the Nation, of the people who live here? That, I thought, was a fundamental question.

It was interesting to note—you may remember—that one of our Republican colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator JOHN KENNEDY of Louisiana, after hearing these witnesses equivocate on whether a public official can defy a court order, came to the committee and basically said: What are you saying? The answer is obvious.

You can criticize a decision of the court within the bounds of propriety as a member of the bar. You can appeal a decision of the court, but if that doesn't satisfy you, your recourse is to quit, resign, leave. The Constitution has the last word. The courts have the last word. And I think that is a question that you are raising today.

Where is the accountability of the President of the United States when he misuses the power of office?

In the cases that you have mentioned, the Alien Enemies Act—it is a law that has been around since 1807 or somewhere around that time—I think it is clear, unless you have declared a war or unless you are invaded, you cannot invoke the Alien Enemies Act as this President has done, and he is being challenged in that regard.

Yesterday, our friend Senator GRASSLEY, who chairs the Judicial Committee—and I say "friend." Some people back home say: Don't say that anymore. We don't talk to those people. They are wrong. This is a body where we do talk to one another, and we should for good reason.

Well, he raised the question yesterday, why is President Trump being challenged so often in court? Well, he has issued 102 Executive orders. I don't know if that is a record, but I will bet it is, 102 Executive orders. Questioning something as basic as birthright sovereignty, birthright citizenship.

And so the point that I am getting to is in obvious situations here where President Trump has gone too far, where is the accountability? It is not going to be an impeachment. We are realists. We know that the Republican House of Representatives is not likely to ever consider that. It could be in the courts.

And if it goes to the courts, the question is, Will this President follow a court order if it goes against his policy? And if he won't follow that court order, where is the accountability? Where is the check and balance? Where is the constitutional framework which is supposed to be at the foundation of this democracy?

I think you are raising important questions, and the Insurrection Act, the use of our military for political purposes, is a frightening prospect. It is something we have avoided throughout our history and should continue to.

And I just commend you for raising this point because I believe it is timely. It is timely as the questions that we ask of these Department of Justice nominees about the enforceability of court orders.

And the question is now, Will the American people speak up? I am counting on some of our Republican friends to speak up too. Throughout history, there have been moments when the party, other than the President's party, showed extreme courage, political courage, and spoke up. We need that kind of voice now. I thank you for raising it on the floor this morning. My question to you is, at this moment in time, as we ask these nominees whether they would follow a court order or defy a court order, doesn't that get to the basics of our constitutional democracy?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, yes, yes, it does. I mean, you put forth this litany where what we have to ask ourselves is at what point do my colleagues in the House and the Senate and the Republican Party say enough? Enough. God bless JOHN KENNEDY for calling out the

absolute absurd. I was in that hearing where you have nominees for some of the highest positions in the administration failing to say that they will abide by a court order.

I mean, that is something we haven't heard people on either side of nominees just say so bluntly now, not, yes, I will follow the orders of a court. They are equivocating. And God bless one of my colleagues, JOHN KENNEDY, who said: That is absurd. You either obey the order or you resign because we have a Constitution.

And so when is it enough? When is it enough? This is the week, this is the month of Passover, and there is a wonderful song I love singing when I am at a Pesach seder—the Dayenu. "It would have been enough," is the song, if God just delivered us from Egypt. It would have been enough if he parted the seas. Dayenu. This is kind of a twisted version of that. When is it enough when the President of the United States starts a meme coin on his first day, violating the emoluments clause immediately and enriching himself?

When is it enough when he takes an Agency that is on the frontlines of stopping infectious diseases, like Ebola or drug-resistant tuberculosis, from coming here? Is that enough? When we created that in Congress, and he has no right to stop that Agency, would that have been enough?

When is it enough for him to issue Executive orders that trample on the highest ideals of this land, when he mocks members of the courts so badly that even the current Chief Justice admonishes him? When is it enough when Elon Musk is indiscriminately firing people and then realizing oops, we need the FAA safety folks; oops, we need the nuclear folks who are helping us keep our regulations? When is it enough that you will say: "OK. I will call them in and have a hearing to create some transparency in what he is doing"?

When is it enough when he activates the Alien Enemies Acts and starts disappearing human beings without due process? When is it enough?

Well, it is enough for me. It is enough for me. Twelve hours now I am standing, and I am still going strong because this President is wrong. And he is violating principles that we hold dear and principles in this document that are so clear and plain. The powers of the article I branch are spelled out, and he is violating them. Don't take my word for it, Republican-appointed judges, Democrat-appointed judges are saying it and stopping him, and then he maligns the judge that did that.

When is it enough for people to speak out and not just fall in line, to put patriotism over a person that is in the White House?

So to your question, sir, to my friend, and I am sorry to get a little animated at this early morning hour, but I am so frustrated and not just because of that, but I am reading the stories.

We are going into the next section, which is national security, and I am

reading the stories of our citizens of this country, not just New Jerseyans, there are a lot we have read in these 12 hours, but there are people from all over the country who are reaching out to my office.

And I know they are yours, Senator DURBIN. You are the second highest ranking Democrat in here. I know they are reaching out to you because you are a man that stands for justice. I know they are reaching out to your office, too, because you are one of the outposts for sanity in a Congress that is being too complicit to an Executive that is overstepping his authority and violating the Constitution and hurting people who rely on healthcare and Social Security.

I am reading these stories, sir, because of the voices of the Americans that don't have the privilege of the 100 of us, who don't get to stand here, but I believe the power of the people is greater than the people in power. Those are the ideals of our democracy and our Constitution.

So I am rip-roaring and ready. I am wide awake. I am going to stand here for as many hours as I can, 12 hours, and I recognize that my other friend, another person I consider more than a friend, like a sister to me, from the State of New York, my neighbor.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Senator BOOKER, would you yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. My sister, for you I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Senator BOOKER, I have been listening to this debate all night, and I have got to say, you are on fire. And you are on fire because the American people are very, very angry about what is happening. They are not happy with what this administration has done. It is contrary to what was promised. It is contrary to what was expected.

And I know we are going to talk about national security in a few minutes, but can I ask a question about one of the topics you talked about last night? Because it was exactly what my constituents were talking to me about yesterday.

So I was in New York yesterday, and we talked about these cuts to Social Security. I have to say, I was stopped by a gentleman who worked at Amtrak and said: Madam Senator, Madam Senator, I just want to thank you for protecting my Social Security. That has never happened to me before. Never happened at Amtrak to be stopped by someone who worked there to thank me for one thing I had done that day.

But I am telling you, Senator BOOKER, when Elon Musk starts firing people in Social Security and tells the Social Security Administration, "You cannot answer the phone," what are our mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers supposed to do? Many of them are not readily available to be on a computer. Many of them can't ask their question online. And, worse, Elon Musk is expecting

them to show up in person at a Social Security office.

How many of our older Americans are not able to drive anymore or are uncomfortable driving? How many of our older Americans feel uncomfortable getting in the subway to get to a Social Security Administration because there are stairs or because the lighting is not good enough?

These are the challenges that our older Americans have, and so I just want to talk about the things you told us last night about the risk to Social Security.

Social Security is our seniors' money. It is not the government's money. It is their money. So what happens when you make it hard for a senior to call and make sure their check is on the way or their check never showed up, and they can't find it?

For a lot of older Americans, that Social Security check is the only money they have for that month. It pays for food, right? It pays for heating bills. It pays for their medicine. It pays for the rent. It pays for everything they need to survive. And Elon Musk's office doesn't believe anybody should be answering the phones. Who is he to tell America how to run its Social Security Administration when our seniors need those checks?

They have crippled the phone service, even though—get this one—they can't answer the phone, crippled the phone service. You can only make an appointment on the phone. So how are you supposed to make an appointment if you are going to go in? I mean, that is absurd. They plan to cut 7,000 staff. That is a lot of staff.

Mr. BOOKER. Seven thousand.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Seven thousand staff, even though the Social Security Administration staffing is already at a 50-year low. So they are lying when they are saying this is about efficiency. They just want the money, and what do they want the money for? Tax cuts for billionaire buddies of Elon Musk. It is an obscenity. It is an absurdity. It is an outrage, and everyone in America should be concerned. Hands off our Social Security, Elon Musk and President Trump. Hands off.

They are rallying all across the country to say: Hands off my Social Security, hands off my Medicare, hands off my Medicaid.

It is an outrage. And I don't think people should stand for it because your Social Security check is your hard-earned money. It is not for Elon Musk to play with, to shift around, or send it to tax breaks for his billionaire friends.

Now, I have to say, my office has been working closely with one senior. Now, she is a New Yorker with a disability, and she was told that she had to call a specific representative's extension by the end of March. Well, that was yesterday. And if she didn't get this person, her application could be denied.

She has called every day, sometimes more than once a day. She has been on

hold for 4 to 5 hours just to reach this representative. As of yesterday when we reached out to her, she had still not reached the representative.

So Americans across the country are panicked. They are stressed. They are worried that they won't get their hard-earned money back, their retirement, to pay for the things that they need.

Now, this is the money they spent their entire careers paying into. You know, every time you get a paycheck, Senator BOOKER, there is a line that says Social Security because that money has been taken out of your paycheck and put into Social Security so it is there for you when you retire. It is your retirement. The pages sitting here right here, you are paying into your Social Security.

Now, imagine, this is your first paycheck, isn't it? I bet it is your first paycheck. Your first paycheck, you are putting in dollars that, you know, you want saved so that when you—you can't even imagine what it is going to be like to be 65. But the day you are working here, the fact that you spent all night here supporting Senator BOOKER, that is your retirement. Wouldn't you be pissed off if Elon Musk took your retirement money? You should be. He doesn't have any right to it, and what he is doing is he is doing it by cutting staff.

So if you need help because your Social Security didn't arrive, then how are you supposed to get that check? They can't issue you a new one unless they know that it didn't show up in the mail like it is supposed to.

Ultimately, cutting individuals from Social Security doesn't just affect them; it affects the entire economy. So you can imagine if all our seniors are getting this Social Security benefit, you can't go then buy your groceries. You are not going to be able to then go buy whatever you need for your home. Those stores will get less money, and that means there will be less resources in the economy.

Social Security, if you didn't know it, is our country's largest anti-poverty program. It keeps people out poverty. That is what it does. When we designed Social Security, however many decades ago, it was so that our seniors don't die in poverty, because they were dying. About half of seniors, at that time, were dying in poverty. They didn't have enough food to live.

And so we created Social Security. It is one of the most popular programs. It is one of the most respected programs.

So reducing access to this key program, Senator BOOKER, is an outrage. It is harmful. It is cruel. It is hurtful.

So I know that this is something that you have really spent a lot of time on last night, but don't you think it is cruel to not allow phone service? Don't you think it is wrong to make it harder for people to get access to their hard-earned money? Don't you think this is something that America did not sign up for in this election?

Mr. BOOKER. I read last night—thank you for the question, my friend.

I read last night some of the most painful letters of people over and over again, from throughout my State and throughout other States, who are living in fear, who use words like “terrified” and told stories that they couldn't sleep because of the rhetoric of this President, the rhetoric of Elon Musk calling it a Ponzi scheme, telling lies during the joint address.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Yes.

Mr. BOOKER. And then I read stories from people that work in Social Security. They are telling about not having desks and the waiting lines and inefficiencies that this has created, and the horrible, deteriorating customer service.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Yes.

Mr. BOOKER. And I have been trying, as much as I can, during these last 12 hours, to read stories of Republicans.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Yes, this affects everyone.

Mr. BOOKER. To read editorials from the Wall Street Journal, to just show that this isn't a partisan thing. This isn't about left or right. It is about right or wrong. It is about will we, as a country, honor our commitments that we made.

And then I read from independent folks that are saying: This is crazy that this program is even in jeopardy.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I have another question for you because I know you want to move on to some national security issues this morning.

Mr. BOOKER. And I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator BOOKER.

So the other thing that stressed out my constituents that I talked about this weekend is air safety. They are very, very stressed out about these cuts to the FAA.

You know, there was a plane crash not too far from here—a helicopter crash. Everyone in that helicopter perished.

We have been reading about stories across the country about flight safety and the fact that there are near collisions all the time.

We had a horrible crash in New York, in Buffalo, the Colgan Air crash. I have gotten to know the families over the last several years because they have worked together for legislation to make sure that we have pilot safety.

But what I have been watching in terms of this administration is they don't seem to care. They just have made up this idea that cuts across the board are necessary to get rid of fraud and waste in the budget.

And I agree we can make government more efficient, but the way you do that is at least learn what each of these Agencies does, study what is happening in them and how to make them more efficient. Make sure the right number of personnel are hired. Make sure the right training is offered. Make sure there are no wasteful programs. That is good government.

That is not what Elon Musk and his DOGE boys are doing. That is nothing like what they are doing. They are just cutting everything because they want to make space for these tax cuts for their billionaire buddies.

It is really disgraceful. It is something that I don't quite understand.

So over the past 2 months—just the past 2 months—we have seen horrifying accidents and near-misses at airports all across the country, and there was another close call just this past Friday, again, at DCA. Many of these accidents have been a result of chronic understaffing and antiquated technologies at the FAA.

But instead of fixing those problems, the first thing that the Trump administration did when it came to power was fire people.

I think he is kind of stuck in the loop of “The Apprentice”: You are fired. You are fired. You are fired.

I don't get it.

Good government is important, and I support efficiency. That is not what they are doing. It is like they are on a power trip, and they just want to fire everybody across the board—just fire them all.

So while the court forced the FAA to rehire workers—thank God for the courts. Thank God for the judges that are doing their jobs and looking at these lawsuits appropriately. Many Federal workers have simply moved on and found new jobs because these are highly skilled, highly sought-after employees, people that we really want working in the Federal Government to keep our country safe.

Now, just weeks after the horrific plane crash here, with 67 people getting killed in Washington, the administration fired hundreds of Federal Aviation Administration employees, jeopardizing the public safety and threatening our national security. So that made no sense. It was right on the heels of some horrific accident that we all witnessed.

Now, over 90 percent of U.S. airport terminal towers don't have enough air traffic controllers. Critical shortages remain for other aviation safety personnel, such as safety inspectors and mechanics, to make sure that, when we get on that plane, that plane is ready to go.

In New York, nearly 40 percent of positions are unfilled at two facilities on Long Island that direct air traffic for Newark, our shared airport, JFK, and LaGuardia. As a result, over these past few years, the United States has experienced a substantial and alarming increase in the number of near-misses.

According to an analysis in the New York Times, in 2023, close calls involving commercial airlines occurred, on average, multiple times each week, and the number of significant air traffic control lapses increased 65 percent over the previous year.

What did they cite as the major reason behind the increase? A shortage of air traffic controllers.

While the Trump administration claims no air traffic controllers or critical safety personnel were fired, we

know that many of those who were let go played essential roles in maintaining our air traffic control infrastructure. Others were responsible for maintaining navigational, landing, and radar systems.

We also know that safety inspectors, systems specialists, and maintenance mechanics are among the workers who were affected. And at least one of the employees fired worked for FAA's National Defense Program, which protects our air space from enemy drones, missiles, and aircraft used as weapons.

I want to talk about those missiles and drones as well. I really want to talk to you about what your thinking is here that we don't have a plan. You have the incursions in New Jersey and incursions in New York at the same time, and we don't have assurance that those drones aren't being operated by China or Russia or Iran or another adversary for a nefarious purpose. We have to get to the bottom of this, and that is something that, Senator BOOKER, you and I have been at the forefront when questioning the administration about what they are doing on this issue.

So the question I have is this: Why did the administration fire these workers and so easily part with them? Who will perform these duties going forward? What risk analysis was performed to ensure this won't make flying less safe?

Now, I asked these questions of the Secretary of Transportation in a letter on February 20, over a month ago. And what was their response? We don't know. They haven't answered my letter. They are not willing to engage the Senate in actual policy and decisions that keep our State safe.

What is worse is that we don't know if this is where it ends or if more reductions are coming and more reductions that allow for safety for our FAA.

Now, DOGE's so-called workforce optimization initiative—it is BS. They don't do the analysis first. They just make the cuts.

We need the Secretary and the Acting FAA Administrator to respond to Congress's questions and oversight. The American people deserve to have a Federal Aviation Agency that is dedicated to actually doing the job of protecting us, protecting this country.

The Trump administration needs to take immediate steps to address FAA staffing shortages across the entire Agency, not just air traffic controllers.

So, Senator BOOKER, the question I really want to ask you is this: For your State, for New Jerseyans, what are they thinking? How do they receive this information? What do they say when they read about drone incursions over one of your arsenals, over one of your sensitive military bases? What do they think about cutting staff at the FAA when they watch all this information about crashes?

I know my constituents are pretty stressed out about it. They don't understand why someone is making these cuts.

Again, the "why" is the most important question. It is not for efficiency. It is not to get rid of the fat. It is not to get rid of the fraud. Never heard an allegation that there is fraud in the FAA. Never heard an allegation that there is fat in the FAA. They have been understaffed forever. So they are lying about the purpose.

So what is the purpose? What is the purpose? What are they going to do with that money, Senator BOOKER? I would like to know.

Mr. BOOKER. So I appreciate this more than you know, and there is a line threaded throughout your entire question about the way they are going about doing this from so many Agencies. First, they are trying to kill certain Agencies—the Department of Education, which they can't legally do. USAID, they can't legally do. We created that—the article I branch of government.

But on some of these other Agencies like Social Security, where you started, we know it is: Ready, fire, aim. And actually the "aim" part never happens. They are savagely cutting personnel and organization after organization.

Seniors, thousands of them, are already writing in about the undermining of service. The Wall Street Journal article we read last night said that the customer service at Social Security is going from bad to worse and painted horrific pictures that are putting seniors in crisis, not to mention the closing of Social Security centers in rural areas, where people have to now drive hours and hours and hours.

And so at the FAA, it was one of the early outrages that they fired people that they then realized they needed and tried to find some way to pull some of them back.

And you and I both know the way they talk about government workers—a large percentage of them are veterans—the way they demean and degrade them, the way they accuse them of being parts of corruption, fraud, or fat, when the stories we have been reading of what some of these folks do is extraordinary.

And so your question, though, brings up a lot of national security issues, and I am going to bridge to that because you and I both were really, really incensed that we weren't getting enough information when we had these incursions. And I want to start—what I have been doing in other sections is just reading, elevating on this floor the voices of people from our country, trying to elevate more of the voices to let people know we see you, we hear you. Your outrage, your hurt, your fears—they have value.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I have another question before you start your letters, Senator BOOKER, if you will take another question, if you will yield.

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. So because you are going into the national security section, I want to give you a couple of

questions to pepper your answers because I sit on the Special Committee on Intelligence in the Senate. I also sit on the Armed Services Committee. And so national security is an area where New Yorkers care a deep amount about, and I have been spending the last 15 years focused on how we keep this country safe and what we should be doing. And so I get a lot of questions from New Yorkers about this issue.

So I want you to address the drone issue, for sure, because that is something you and I have been working on continuously since we have seen these incursions.

And just to give a little more context for New Yorkers who might be listening to this debate, we have had drone incursions over sensitive military sites for quite some time now, and it is something that I have been working on on a bipartisan basis through the Intelligence Committee. Some of these incursions are every night, over and over again, over sensitive military bases. There was one over Langley. We have had them over arsenals in New Jersey, over sensitive sites in New York. We have had them over military bases across the country.

And, you know, I don't like it when the answer is, "Oh, we know where most of this is. This is mostly FAA traffic." I don't like it when I hear it from this administration—or any administration—because it is not true. Some of the drone sightings are planes in the air, helicopters, you know, maybe weather balloons, maybe enthusiasts, but they do not know if all are. And with these specific incursions, they do not know the origin of them. They do not know whose they are. They do not know who is operating them. They do not know the purpose of these drones. These drones could easily be spying. They could be planning attacks. They could be doing anything nefarious. We have no basis to say it is all known, and we are not concerned.

So this is something we are going to get to the bottom of. I am very incensed about it. It does not leave our personnel safe. It does not leave our secrets safe. So drones is one issue.

The second issue, if you could address it, is on the national security side: cyber security. I think that—and election security.

One of the cuts that the DOGE boys made—which I literally cannot understand why they would ever do this. This is making us weaker. It is making us less safe. It is not good for America. It shows how ill-advised this process is and how uninformed this process is and how we can see through these cuts and how insincere this process is. This is not about waste. This is not about fraud. This is not about good government. This is about making massive cuts for tax breaks for billionaires because that is where they want to spend your tax dollars—New Yorkers' tax dollars and New Jerseyans' tax dollars. They want to take it and give it as tax breaks to billionaires.

OK. So this is the question. They have cut all of the personnel—or the main personnel—at an organization called CISA that we are supposed to be doing election security with. So the people who actually were working with the States to make sure our election system can't be hacked—they fired those people. They fired the senior personnel at the Department of Defense, our most experienced generals across the board, members from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They just fired them. For what reason? I don't know. No substantive reason was ever given, but these are the senior personnel who actually keep us from wars, who have the judgment and the experience to advise the President, to advise Congress, to advise us on how to keep us safe.

Then the last group they cut were the lawyers. Do you remember that Shakespeare play: The first thing we do is kill all the lawyers? Well, the context in which that was given was in order to have a coup. So Shakespeare, hundreds of years ago, said: If you want to have a coup, the first thing you do is you kill all the lawyers. Well, they fired all the lawyers—the senior lawyers—of the Department of Defense. They fired the generals who actually know how to keep us safe, and then they fired the personnel at CISA, who are responsible for election interference. They fired the people at the FBI, who were also responsible for election interference. So, again, these firings make no sense. I don't think they are making us less—I don't think they are making us more safe. I think they are making us less safe. When you fire the people who know what they are doing and are dedicated to keeping us safe, it doesn't make us safer.

What do you think, Senator BOOKER, about any of the topics that I raised, specifically on the drones, the firings of the election protection personnel at CISA, the firings of the generals, the firings of the senior lawyers at the Department of Defense, or the firings of the FBI personnel, who are also expert at election interference? These are the smartest, most capable, the most sophisticated, senior personnel who are there to help us keep this country safe. I really want to hear what you are hearing from your State and what you are thinking about this reckless, reckless approach to national security.

Mr. BOOKER. I am so grateful for the questions from my colleague and my friend.

I want folks to know, probably the best dinner I had here when I came here was with the Senator from New York, who really gave me a quick run-down on how to get things done in this body. I have watched her work on both sides of the aisle, relentlessly, to get things over the finish line and to help people in our region—from the 9/11 folks, who were our first responders, to get their healthcare; to fight to support the military, to empower the military; but to fight against sexual assault in the military. She is one of these phenomenal people.

A lot of the questions we are going to get to, including that question that was obviously painful about national security, is like, hey, one of the strategies of Russia—and we know this—is to attack the elections of other democracies, to try to sow discord, to try to undermine the very voting process, and the Trump administration pulled away a lot of the people from the DOJ and elsewhere when their sole purpose was to fight against foreign election interference.

So how can we have a nation where the President is in charge of national security and is not doing things to address the issues that were in your questions?

I want to start by reading a couple of constituent letters. I know we want to step back and talk a little bit about immigration, as my colleague and my friend and my partner in leadership in the Senate TINA SMITH is here, but I want to get into some of these letters because I said over 12 hours ago that we were going to continue to elevate the voices of people out there.

So this is coming from—I just want to—from someone from New Jersey. They are writing:

Dear Senator Booker, I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the current state of our Nation and the lack of response to the looming constitutional crisis. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the actions of a President who routinely lies and makes outrageous proposals such as annexing Greenland, Mexico, and Panama or even renaming the Gulf of Mexico. Those proposals not only undermine our international standing but also disrespect the foundations of our country.

Furthermore, I am alarmed by the growing threat to press freedom. Recently, for example, the Associated Press was barred from the White House press room simply for referring to the Gulf of Mexico rather than the Gulf of America—a clear sign of the President's disregard for free speech and a free press's role in holding power to account.

The President is actively trampling on the Constitution and blatantly ignoring the rule of law—

As Senator GILLIBRAND was saying:

He has taken steps to slash vital Federal Agencies and disaster relief programs, undermining our Nation's capacity to respond to crises. His decision to appoint unqualified individuals to high positions for the purpose of following his will is another example of how our democratic systems are being systematically weakened.

Additionally, his reckless and irresponsible approach to foreign policy is making the world more dangerous. His insistence on blaming Ukraine for Russia's invasion and ongoing war is not only historically inaccurate but also deeply damaging to our allies and global stability. Even worse, his administration has entertained so-called peace settlements that exclude Ukraine from the process entirely, effectively allowing Russia to dictate terms without any Ukrainian input. Such actions betray our commitments to sovereignty and democracy and embolden authoritarian regimes worldwide.

Domestically, his agenda is destructive. His administration has pursued the withdrawal from the USAID, the gutting of critical global humanitarian and development efforts that have long served U.S. interests abroad.

At home, he is enabling tech billionaires like Elon Musk to take a chain saw to government Agencies, arbitrarily dismantling institutions that provide essential public services. His attacks on the NIH and its funding jeopardize critical medical research and public health initiatives, undermining scientific progress for purely ideological reasons.

Beyond these threats, his treatment of our closest allies is both reckless and embarrassing. His taunting of Canada, whether through inflammatory rhetoric or deliberate policy snubs, weakens our diplomatic ties and disregards the importance of maintaining strong relationships with our neighbors. This petty, shortsighted approach to international regulations has isolated the United States at a time when global cooperation is more critical than ever.

My greatest frustration, however, is the lack of action from our Representatives and Governors. Too many are cowering in fear of the President's authoritarian tactics. I am troubled by the absence of pushback. I am troubled by the absence of pushback. I am troubled by the absence of pushback. We are witnessing the erosion of checks and balances, and the consequences could be dire.

I was heartened by Governor Janet Mills, of Maine, standing up to the President's orders. Unfortunately, his response was a threat to her political future—further evidence of the intimidation tactics being employed.

I implore you, Senator Booker, to show some moral courage and take meaningful action to stand up to this growing threat to our democracy. Please let me know how you are responding to the situation and what steps you, Senator Booker, are taking to defend our Constitution and the rule of law. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I hope at this early morning hour, at almost 8 o'clock, that maybe you are listening, because I hear you; I see you; and I am standing here because I am part of letters like yours. This is not normal. These are not normal times, and we must begin to do as John Lewis said: Get in good trouble. Get in necessary trouble.

I want to read from another constituent. I just want to see where this person is from. I am not trying to violate the privacy, which my staff doesn't want me to do.

Mr. MURPHY. Chippewa Falls.

Mr. BOOKER. What's that?

Mr. MURPHY. Chippewa Falls.

Mr. BOOKER. We know Wisconsin is getting a lot of love here. I told my colleague I kept seeing folks from two towns—one in your State and one in the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, but this person, alas, is from Jersey.

I wrote to ask you to do all you can to resolve funding for the National Institutes of Health and USAID. I work in information technology at Princeton University, and I have seen firsthand the destruction the termination of funds is causing to research and education. We are losing the momentum of research and causing a deep and lasting loss of educational resources. The NIH and the National Science Foundation provide funds for basic research as well as applied topics. The benefits of this research will be long lasting, and the cost of disruption will be very high.

Similarly, the disruption of USAID is tragic. My daughter works for an organization

working with USAID on climate mitigation and adaptation. She has lost job security as a result of the Trump administration's actions. Work she has built on in Ethiopia, Kenya, and elsewhere will be disrupted due to lack of funding.

Thank you for your leadership as our Senator. I am proud to be represented by you as well as our new Senator, Andy Kim.

The promise of our country is great, but we must redefine our purpose and imagine a new future. Your experience and knowledge will be critical to our country's success.

Let me go with two more and then turn to my colleague. This is a short one.

I am writing to express my concerns about the chaos and lawlessness coming out of the White House. USAID must be restored. Please use powers to restore democracy to the United States of America. This is not what democracy looks like. Thank you.

Somebody from New Jersey.

And one more. One more. One more voice.

As a parent of a USAID Foreign Service Officer recently in Ukraine and now in Kenya, I am outraged and horrified by the coup now being staged by Elon Musk under the authority from the President. To be called "criminal" after putting your life at risk in the service of America's interests is itself to be a victim of criminal-like behavior.

I have seen the beautiful roads and railroads in Africa, built by the Chinese. In one fell swoop, Trump has given that continent to the Chinese and the Russians. He did the same thing years ago by canceling participation in the Pacific free trade pact, forfeiting our power and our good will, making China the largest player in the region. I saw the good will in the eyes of passersby from the Philippines to Georgia to Tajikistan. Now I hear it turn to hostility.

Think of sports fans in Canada, booing our National Anthem. Think also of the infants who will now die of AIDS because USAID's treatment program was abruptly stopped, along with vaccinations programs and programs for stopping diseases such as Ebola, monkey pox, hemorrhagic fever. These diseases will come home with even a 90-day pause of workers in these programs. We will lose jobs, and rent, and some never will return. Refrigeration of medicines will be at risk. Clinics and offices will become unavailable. Humpty Dumpty will not be quickly put back together again.

Some of what Trump wants to do will ultimately need approval of Congress. I urge you to fight every one of his proposals and appointments. Slow the legislative process as much as you can, please. I hope Trump will lose his majority. Thank you for your attention.

I will be of service in any way possible to right these wrongs.

I love when constituents don't only point out what is wrong but stand up and say: I will be of service. Let me know how I can help.

Your voice is helping tonight. Speaking to these issues is helping tonight.

I know my Senate colleague is here. She has a question. I will yield while retaining the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, thank you, and thank you to my colleague from New Jersey for yielding for a question.

I want to just start by thanking my colleague, who is one of my dearest friends in the Senate, for using your voice in such a powerful way over the many, many hours that you have been holding the Senate floor. I know you well enough to know that you are not doing this because of your belief in the power of your voice; you are doing this because of your belief in the power of all of the voices that you have been amplifying all through the night and your belief of the importance of the millions of Americans who are so frightened and concerned and horrified by what they see this administration is doing and wanting to feel like there is somebody here who is fighting for them and who is listening to them.

The way in which you are reading these letters today and all through the night, Senator BOOKER, I think is a tribute to your respect for all of those Americans. So I am so grateful for that.

I wanted to take a moment, if I could, to ask you to yield for a question related to what you have been talking about.

You know, I certainly agree with you that these are not normal times in our Nation. As elected officials, it is our duty to speak up and to fight back against the abuses and the overreach of this administration and to raise up the voices of our constituents who, as I said, are both frightened and furious about what is happening.

My question to you, Senator BOOKER, is about some of the Trump administration's recent actions regarding immigration. My question is in three parts.

First, I think that we can all agree that our current immigration system in this country is broken. It is not working well for anyone. It is not working well for American businesses that depend on a global talent pool. It is not working well for families who want to reunite with their loved ones. It is not working well at all for those who seek refuge from persecution and believe in the promises that are carved into the Statue of Liberty.

To my colleague, I ask these questions, and I think about the issues, about the shortcomings of our immigration as the Senator from Minnesota, where our meat processing sector relies so much on immigrant labor, where the University of Minnesota is a beacon for international students studying science and technology and agriculture, where the resorts in Minnesota rely on folks from all over the country to come and make them work as little mom-and-pop, 12-cabin operations up on lakes in northern Minnesota and the manufacturers rely on, as I said, the best and the brightest from all over the world coming to serve in our State and serving our economy.

I think we know, my colleague from New Jersey, that there have been real and serious bipartisan attempts at comprehensive immigration reform debated in this body. While I might not

have agreed with everything in these proposals—I suspect you might not have as well—I think we both, I am sure, strongly believe that immigration is an issue that merits real debate and real policy solutions. Our colleague who was here on the floor with us this morning, Senator MURPHY from Connecticut, has worked so hard to find real, bipartisan solutions.

I believe that comprehensive immigration reform needs to ensure our national security. It needs to provide a fair and workable path for immigrants who want to come and contribute to the American dream, which is what truly makes this country great.

But here is the rub: The Trump administration's recent actions show that they are not interested in serious policy reforms that would make Americans safer or make our immigration system work more efficiently and fairly. Instead, what I think we can see is that this President has prioritized using our immigration system as a tool to restrict First Amendment freedoms, to subvert due process, and to further weaken America's global standing with our allies and our regional partners as he seeks to emulate the authoritarian regimes he so openly admires.

As just one example, in recent weeks, we have seen a number of international students targeted for arrest and deportation merely on the basis of their pro-Palestinian advocacy. These are young people who played by all the rules. They entered this country with permission in order to further their education and have not been accused or charged with any criminal activity.

Their views on the war in Gaza may differ sharply from mine or others, but I believe that the First Amendment guarantees them the right to express those views without facing punishment or reprisal from our government.

Nonetheless, the Trump administration has admitted that they are doing exactly that—seeking to punish lawfully present immigrants and in some cases even green card holders because of the political views they have expressed. The Secretary of State has invoked a rarely used section of statute that allows him to unilaterally designate for removal any alien who may cause "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences."

As if that is not enough, many of these arrests have been carried out in a manner that seems calculated to maximize fear and intimidation in immigrant and activist communities. Here is an example for my colleague to respond to. I want to take the case of the recent arrest of Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish graduate student at Tufts University who was studying the relationship between child development and our social media-saturated, globally connected world. She is here on a valid student visa, she is not accused of any crime, and by all accounts, she is a loved and valued member of the Tufts community. Her only purported offense was being one of four coauthors of an

op-ed in the student newspaper that urged the administration of Tufts to engage with students' calls to divest from businesses with ties to Israel and the IDF. For that offense, her visa was revoked with no notice, and she was arrested on the street and spirited more than 1,500 miles away, which is likely a violation of a judge's order, to await her probable deportation.

I am sure many of my colleagues, including my colleague from New Jersey, have seen the video of her arrest, which was captured by a neighbor's security camera. It is utterly chilling. She is surrounded by officers in plainclothes, with no visible insignia, no markings at all on their clothing. She is handled roughly. Her belongings are taken away from her and her hands are cuffed before being loaded into an unmarked car.

It is no exaggeration that her arrest looks like a kidnapping—one that you might expect to see in Moscow rather than the streets of Boston.

Of course, the terror of what she experienced is horrible to think about, but I also think about the thousands and thousands and thousands of other students here with a student visa or, you know, other lawful immigrants who see this and think to themselves: This could happen to me. This could be something that happens to my roommate or my student or anybody.

It seems like such a breakdown in the rule of law and the way our country should operate.

So I would like to ask my colleague: Does this seem normal or appropriate, for Federal law enforcement officers of the United States to conduct routine arrests in plainclothes, with unmarked cars, and with this overwhelming show of force for individuals who pose no obvious physical threat to those law enforcement?

Furthermore, is this not exactly the sort of operations that you would order if your goal is to intimidate and dissuade immigrant and activist communities from exercising their constitutional rights to free speech?

Does punishing people for their political speech seem consistent with American democratic values? I can't believe that we would think that it would be consistent.

I wonder if my colleague from New Jersey would like to respond in any way to this.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to respond deeply. I, first, want to thank my colleague for being here in the morning. She is one of my colleagues that I confided in when I told her it was enough for me, I needed to do something different, and she readily encouraged me to be here on the floor for what is now about 13 hours. She has encouraged me. She has encouraged my heart and is just one of my dear friends. I am just so grateful to see her this morning.

I want to say something before I begin answering her question. In my hometown where I grew up in Bergen County, there is a family, the Alexan-

ders, whose son Edan is an American who is being held by Hamas. He is being likely tortured and in trauma and in pain. He is a U.S. citizen. He is an American.

I had a friend with me just recently, a man who was driving me around. I have this ribbon that I often use that I keep in my pocket. It reminds me of him and my determination to bring him home—bring him home. I want his family to know that, as a State Senator, he is in my thoughts.

I also feel there are so many New Jerseyans who are affected by this crisis, who lost family members in the region. We must bring peace.

Then my friend Senator SMITH asked this question about—which is a real test because when you disagree with someone's statements so much, but the very nature of the First Amendment—what makes this document so precious is that it says that no matter how reprehensible your speech is, this document says you have the right to say it.

I remember the controversy over an NFL player who kneeled. One of the voices that sticks in my head is a White guy from the military who just said: I fought battles—I think it was Afghanistan—and I am offended by his taking a knee, but the very reason I fought was so that he would have the freedom to do it.

So I came back. I was there on October 7. I have very hurt, strong feelings about what is going on over there and urgent desires to end the nightmare, to bring people like Edan home, to end the nightmare for so many Israelis and Palestinians. I find so many things people are saying so unhelpful to the crisis and to the moral truth that I believe in. But I will fight for people's rights.

So here is a situation where you see a video, and it just doesn't seem like who we are. If you are revoking somebody's visa, make a phone call. Tell them: You have 30 days to leave. But there should be due process. You should have to prove your claims in court. If this person is somehow aligning with some kind of enemy, prove it. But what I saw there doesn't reflect the highest ideals.

God, if this Constitution was easy, it wouldn't be worth the paper it is written on.

So I love my friend because she wades into some difficult waters, but she is guided by the oath that she took to defend the Constitution, and in these complex and difficult times, she is standing up.

And I tell you, when we were in the immigration section last night—or earlier, I should say—we read the most painful stories. My brother over on the other side of me—I have got some of my really dear friends on the floor right now: Senator MURPHY, Senator WARNOCK, Senator SMITH.

My brother Senator WARNOCK knows that we are a nation that is paying hundreds of millions of dollars over the years of the Trump administration to

fund private prisons that are being paid, incentivized, to take away people's liberties. We read stories in the immigration section about people that got trapped in those systems that should never be there—horrible stories, painful voices I have read, about folks who were caught up in a system.

And I just loved that one article from the Canadian who was, for weeks, put in a private prison. And suddenly, when she heard the lies of the people who found ways to keep her there—the “aha” moment that she realized: These people, every day I am there, they get profit. They are not incentivized by justice; they are incentivized by profit.

I read stories, Senator SMITH, of people who were sent to that horrible jail in El Salvador that the government admitted they made a mistake. They disappeared someone who has American family members. Story after story I read that just are such a betrayal not of democratic values but of American values because we all in this body know we need to do more to protect our borders, to keep us safe, to arrest criminals, be they undocumented or documented. That is an urgency we all feel.

But when you sacrifice your core values, when you sacrifice them to a demagogue who says, “This is all about your safety,” when you sacrifice your core principles for your safety, you will achieve neither. You will neither be safe nor morally strong.

The true leaders on both sides of the aisle that I have heard over the years talk on these issues say we can do both; we can make our country safe, and we can abide by our values. And in a complex world where country after country disappears people, when authoritarian countries disappear their political enemies, their political adversaries, disappear people who say things they politically disagree with—those countries are looking to us.

Did you know, when Donald Trump started using that phrase “fake news, fake news, fake news,” that in Turkey, Erdogan started arresting people on charges of fake news—because we are looked to. I believe, like Reagan said, we could be that city on the hill, but we are up high, and folks are going to look to us.

But what is the world order going to be? What is democracy globally going to look like? Are we going to defend democracy and democratic principles or will we behave like the authoritarians that we should be against?

So this is a fundamental question you ask, and it has been resonating all these 13 hours. We keep coming back to the Constitution because so many things the Trump administration is doing, from the separation of powers to violating the very first words of our Constitution, the very first words, this commitment we make when we swear oaths, all of us: “We the People of the United States” of America—this is our mandate—“in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice”—it

comes really quick. It comes really quick. Is it just to disappear a human being with no due process?

I quoted Antonin Scalia, this conservative that was sitting on a stage with somebody he had a lot of affection for, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and this moderator asked him: Does somebody in our country have the rights of this document? And he said: Yes, especially the 14th Amendment that doesn't say any "citizen"; it says no "person," no body.

So where do we stand when our Founders, those imperfect geniuses, say: "We the People . . . in Order to form a more perfect Union"—"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity"—what Nation are we turning over to the next President, to the next Congress, when this Congress is sacrificing the powers that are given right underneath that preamble? It is article I which spells out: "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."

And then it goes on to talk about what we have the power to do. We set the laws.

This President is invoking emergency powers like the alien insurrection act, a 1790-something law that the last time it was used was in World War II to detain Japanese Americans—something so shameful—to put them in concentration camps here in America.

He wants to take power from our Congress. And the thing that is killing me, that is actually breaking my heart, Brother WARNOCK, the thing that is actually breaking my heart is that we are letting him, that we are letting him take our power.

If Elon Musk were a Democrat and Joe Biden said, "Hey, go after the spending power of Congress," all the things that they approved—it is hard to do bipartisan things here. God bless PATTY MURRAY and SUSAN COLLINS coming together and getting spending bills—hard work—done. Lord knows, I sometimes play a little Motown in here. I ain't too proud to beg. I go to the Appropriations leader and say: Hey, my New Jerseyans in this county need this. We work on all these—I fight for programs with LINDSEY GRAHAM and USAID with now-Secretary of State Marco Rubio, programs that he approved.

The Department of Education. I have worked with Republicans to put things in the Department of Education. There are people here that worked in a bipartisan way to try to simplify the FAFSA forms. I could go through all the work we have done that now this body—the article I branch of the Constitution, right under the mandate of the United States of America, as TINA SMITH is telling us, right after "We the

People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice"—the Senator, my friend, and so that is why we are here. That is why, now, the Senate is filling up. It is friends galore. We have AMY KLOBUCHAR now on the floor.

That is why we are here. No business as usual. No business as usual. We are not doing the usual order. We are talking about these things. We are making the case. We talked about immigration. We talked about Medicaid. We talked about Medicare. We talked about healthcare. We talked about medical research. We talked about Social Security. We are marching through. We are marching through. Thirteen hours. I have more in the tank.

And so I thank you for that question. It brings up very emotional things for me; I will be honest. It brings up pain and frustration and hurt. It brings up, for me, the pain of so many New Jerseyans that have reached out—the Palestinian doctors in my State who worked with my office to get Palestinian babies into America for care. It brings up the hurt of being there and seeing the worst slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust.

So many things are painful, but if we sacrifice our values, it reminds me of the mosque being built, 9/11. It reminds me of all these difficult points: the marchers in Skokie, of KKK—all these difficult points where the values of this Constitution were tested, where we were being measured.

But I have to say, what this President is doing with the alien insurrection act, what this President is doing with no due process, what this President is doing with flushing the Department of Education, with getting rid of the USAID, with attacking thousands of people that serve our veterans and that serve our Social Security—those things should be obvious to this institution, to the Senate, that that is wrong, that they have unelected—the biggest campaign donor, unelected, who is getting our personal information, and there is no transparency. Nobody in this body can say they know what confidential information was let out, Elon Musk has, and knows what they do with it because they didn't bring him here to answer for it.

So I thank my colleague for the question. And I know Reverend WARNOCK is going to ask me one. I just want to take us a couple pages into this for a second.

The American people alone, our approach to foreign policy practiced by the President—what the President has done is left our allies feeling abandoned, feeling degraded and insulted. He has left our adversaries feeling emboldened and has done things that have hurt our national security, that has made Americans less safe.

In the short time President Trump has been in office for a second term, Americans have already been put in harm's way because of the reckless ap-

proach of the administration. It all begins, in fact, with his extremely poor judgment. This administration has prioritized the obsequiousness to Donald Trump over the expertise when it comes to some of the most important national security jobs, and it has sidelined dedicated professionals who have devoted their lives to keeping our country safe.

This administration has also demonstrated an inability to distinguish between America's adversaries and America's allies and a disturbing failure to understand how America's partnerships and investments abroad protect and benefit communities here.

I am reminded of General Mattis saying: If you are cutting things like the USAID or the State Department, buy me more bullets.

But this is something that folks on the floor have talked about. I see one of my friends and somebody I really look up to—I see TIM Kaine—who sits a little bit higher up on the dais than I on the Foreign Relations Committee, somebody I have turned to many times. And he was astonished by this. And I know he, like me, has had private conversations with our Republican colleagues about this. But this body has not called for one hearing or one investigation. No accountability.

What am I talking about? It is when, last week, we learned Vice President JD VANCE, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, Director of the CIA John Ratcliffe, Trump's National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff, and several other high-ranking officials in the Trump administration discussed attack plans against the Houthis in Yemen in a group chat over the commercial messaging app Signal.

We learned of this because the President's National Security Advisor mistakenly invited the editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, Jeffrey Goldberg, on the text chain. And after Jeffrey Goldberg published a story describing this jaw-dropping national security failure where they could have broken at least two laws that I am aware of just by doing that—from the preservation of public records all the way to disclosing national security, highly classified information—the President and his Cabinet members didn't step up and say, "We made mistakes," didn't step up and say, "This is clearly abjectly wrong," didn't step up and say, "There will be accountability," didn't step up and say, "We will take actions." No.

What they decided to do when they were exposed is actually target the reporter with a barrage of insults and not acknowledging any wrongdoing. Unsurprisingly, the Trump team's response led Jeffrey Goldberg to publish the rest of the Signal chat messages, which exposed more administration lies.

We are going to go into that, but I really want to turn to my brother. And

I said earlier about Senator MURPHY's speech, one of my favorites I have ever actually heard when I was in the Senate—Brother WARNOCK gave a speech that was one of my favorites in the Senate, too, when he talked about the difference between January 5 America and that fateful day, January 6.

He has been a friend of mine for a long time. I think he might be the only person in this body—I started this talk 13 hours ago by talking about getting into good trouble. I think you might be the only person in this body that was arrested in this building for protesting before you came to serve in this building as a U.S. Senator.

I am going to stick to what I am told to say. If you ask me that you would like to speak—you have to say, "I would like to ask you a question." I think that is how this goes.

Mr. WARNOCK. Will the Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Why, yes. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WARNOCK. Good morning, and let me just say, CORY BOOKER, how very, very proud I am of you. It is a real honor to serve in this body.

I know that all of my colleagues who are here agree that it is an honor for the people of your State to say that when we take stock of all the issues that we wrestle with, as we look into the eyes of our children and consider what we want for them, and into the eyes of our aging parents as they deal with the blessings and the burdens of getting older, since all of us can't go to Washington, we are going to send you.

And we are going to trust that, in rooms of power where decisions are being made, you are going to center the people and not yourself. You are going to be thinking about ordinary people.

And so CORY BOOKER, I want to thank you for holding vigil. As I prepare to ask you a question, I just want to thank you for holding vigil for this country all night.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said that when he marched with Dr. King, he felt like his legs were praying.

So in a very real sense, your legs have been praying as you have been standing on this floor all night. And thank you for praying not just with your lips but with your legs for a nation in need of healing.

I just got off a prayer call that I do every Tuesday morning at 7:14 a.m.

That is 2 Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and will heal the land.

The Nation needs healing. We need spiritual healing. We need moral healing.

But, literally, there are people all across our country who need healing, who need healthcare. So that is why I was so proud to come to this Senate after being arrested in the Rotunda a few years before that, proud to join you

in the Senate, proud that we were able to pass, just a couple of months after I got here, the American Rescue Plan, which did so much incredible work.

In that American Rescue Plan, there was the expanded child tax credit, which literally cut child poverty more than 40 percent in our country. I wish we could get it extended.

One of the other things we did was we lowered Georgians' and Americans' healthcare premiums by hundreds of dollars on average.

We passed a tax cut—and that is so relevant in this moment because that is what this body is prepared to do, I guess, in the next few days—pass the tax cut, but that tax cut is literally going to be for the richest of the rich, the wealthiest among us.

But we passed a tax cut that brought healthcare into reach for tens of thousands of Georgians and millions of Americans in the American Rescue Plan. These tax credits are so critical that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said that the number of Americans without healthcare would grow by 3.8 million people in just 1 year if the premium subsidies were allowed to expire.

Forgive me for my phone ringing. My 8-year-old and 6-year-old are calling me. They are not impressed with what I am doing.

Mr. BOOKER. That is an important phone call.

Mr. WARNOCK. They are not impressed.

But we know that this would impact thousands of Georgians who have only recently been able to receive healthcare. We passed in that American Rescue Plan these tax credits, which put healthcare in reach, and now they are set to expire if we don't do our work. That is why what you are doing, CORY BOOKER, is holy work. It is within a political context, but this is holy work.

If these tax credits are allowed to expire, a 45-year-old in Georgia with \$62,000 in annual income would see premiums go up by \$1,414 a year.

A 60-year-old couple in Georgia with an \$82,000 annual income would see premiums go up by a staggering \$18,157 a year. Think about that.

Nearly one-third of Americans have less than \$500 in savings in their bank account. Imagine the healthcare costs for a 60-year-old couple going up by more than \$18,000.

A health insurance premium hike like this would be more than an inconvenience. It wouldn't just be a nuisance. It is literally the difference between having healthcare coverage and not having healthcare coverage.

So I am thinking about people like that. I am thinking about my constituent Cassie Cox from Bainbridge, GA. She wasn't able to afford healthcare on the Affordable Care Act marketplace until the premium tax credit brought healthcare into reach.

Shortly after she became insured, she severely cut her hand, which landed

her in the emergency room with 35 stitches. With insurance, it still cost her about \$300. Had it not been for the tax credits that allowed her to get healthcare, she could have been in financial ruin.

She is one of the hundreds of thousands of Georgians at risk of losing their coverage if these tax credits are allowed to expire, if we don't do our work, if we are more focused on the wealthiest of the wealthy rather than the concerns of ordinary people.

Senator BOOKER, should Democrats and Republicans come together to extend the premium tax credit for hard-working folks in New Jersey and in Georgia? What do you think?

Mr. BOOKER. That is my easiest colleague's question I have gotten within these 13 hours.

Yes, they should. I was talking in the healthcare section about, while there are these big issues that we should be concerned about—\$880 billion for Medicaid—cutting all of that out to give to the wealthiest, as you said—God bless them; they don't need our help; they don't need more tax cuts—to give them tax cuts, and explode the deficit, this is literally taking from working Americans.

The letters we read, the voices of Americans, the fear, the anguish, the hurt, the worry, people who were suffering from Parkinson's, who had children with disabilities, who had elder parents living with them, so many people telling them—not \$880 billion, their whole financial well-being was hanging on a thread and just cutting transportation programs involved.

But I said, while all that was going on, the Trump administration was still doing other things to attack ACA enrollment, to attack the tax credits that people are relying on, and doing other things to drive up costs.

I know some of my colleagues are on the floor, like AMY KLOBUCHAR. We have centered the lowering prescription costs, and he is doing things to drive out-of-pocket costs up. There is a cruelty in that.

And I intend to still be standing at noon, when we have the pause in the Senate for the Pledge and the prayer.

And, Pastor, I want to talk to you in the way that you talked to me last night.

I called my brother, I called my friend, and told him I was doing this—and WARNOCK shifts gears a lot in my life. Sometimes, he is my colleague. Sometimes, he is my brother. Sometimes, we talk about the state of unmarried guys in the Senate. I won't put you on blast, sir.

Mr. WARNOCK. The bald-headed caucus.

Mr. BOOKER. The bald-headed caucus.

But the one time you shifted gears into being my pastor and my friend, we prayed together last night. And most Americans identify in our faith—the Christian faith. And you and I know—I would yield for you to ask a question,

but I am yielding just to have you talk about Matthew 25.

Mr. WARNOCK. Right. Right. I am a Matthew 25 Christian.

Mr. BOOKER. You and I both. That is what we hold in common.

Mr. WARNOCK. It is a long chapter, but in the section we are talking about, in Matthew 25, Jesus says: I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was sick.

Mr. BOOKER. What were you?

Mr. WARNOCK. I was in prison, and you came to visit me. And someone asked: Lord, when were You sick? When were You in prison? When were You an undocumented immigrant?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes.

Mr. WARNOCK. And the answer comes: In as much as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it also unto me.

Another part of that text says: And when you don't do it for the least of these, you don't do it for me.

The Scripture says that the one who gives to the poor renders to the Lord. This is holy work.

Mr. BOOKER. Sir, my friend, I don't understand how a nation could allow a President to be so cruel that he would take away healthcare from people struggling with children that are facing the worst of health challenges, people who have a spouse like the person who wrote to me—no, it wasn't a spouse. She wrote me herself. She had Parkinson's.

I got upset because that is how my father died. I watched, year after year after year, how it affected my family, how it demanded from my mother, how it cost thousands of dollars for his care. And thank God we have the privilege. But this person was writing because they were afraid, and they didn't know what the costs would be.

How can our country say that kind of cruelty—how could a nation where the majority of its people are people of faith, be they Muslim or Jain or Baha'i or Hindu or Jewish—how can the central precept of our country, founded on principles that are reflected in the Good Book—how could we say that we should cut healthcare from the sick and the needy to give bigger tax cuts to Elon Musk?

Mr. WARNOCK. Will the Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield to you, my brother, while retaining the floor.

Mr. WARNOCK. You know, this is the reason why every Sunday and every weekend, when I leave here, I return not only to Georgia, but I return to my pulpit. Some folks ask: Why do you continue to lead Ebenezer Church?

I return to my pulpit every Sunday because, notwithstanding wonderful people like you, I don't want to spend all my time talking to politicians. I am afraid I might accidentally become one.

So I want to connect and check in with ordinary folks because I was focused on this healthcare issue long before I came to the Congress.

Dr. King said that of all injustices, inequality in healthcare is "the most shocking and the most inhumane."

Mr. BOOKER. I read that last night, Pastor. I read that last night.

Mr. WARNOCK. "The most shocking and most inhumane."

It is the reason why, as a pastor, inspired by Dr. King, leading the congregation that Dr. King led—way back in 2014, when the Affordable Care Act was passed, were you here? You came after.

Mr. BOOKER. I came after.

Mr. WARNOCK. You came right after that.

I got arrested in the Governor's office in Georgia, fighting for healthcare.

Mr. BOOKER. I didn't know you were a two-time arrestee, man.

Mr. WARNOCK. I got a long record, brother, but, also, good trouble.

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, good trouble.

Mr. WARNOCK. Good trouble.

We had a 1960 sit-in in the Governor's office. Waves of us got arrested. They arrested one wave. Then another wave came, and another wave came. We were trying to get Georgia to expand Medicaid.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I remember that.

Mr. WARNOCK. We passed the Affordable Care Act here, but Georgia was digging in its heels, and said: No, we are not going to expand Medicaid.

So when I got here, Senator KLOBUCHAR, I made it a priority of mine to get incentives for Georgia to expand Medicaid. And you remember, I went to our caucus and I said: Look, Georgia and about 9—then 10—other States have not expanded. They should have done it a long time ago. Let's see if we can make it even easier for them.

As a freshman Senator, I was able to convince our caucus to give \$14.5 billion for nonexpansion States, which includes \$2 billion just for Georgia to incentivize Medicaid expansion.

Why? So that working people in the gap, people who literally go to work every day, can get healthcare. Georgians left at \$2 billion sitting on the table and almost 600,000 Georgians in the gap. The Governor's plan has literally enrolled a whopping 6,500 people in healthcare, but we got nearly 600,000 people in the gap. This is not theoretical stuff.

Every time I talk about this, I have to talk about Heather Payne, because Heather Payne is a resident of Dalton, GA. She spent her career taking care of others. She is a traveling nurse. Heather worked throughout COVID as an ER and labor and delivery nurse, yet, often, she did not have healthcare coverage herself because she fell into the healthcare coverage gap. Sometimes she had health insurance coverage; sometimes she didn't.

She made too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but the only coverage options available to her were unaffordable, costing anywhere between \$500 and \$1,000 a month. And so about 2½ years ago, Heather Payne, a traveling nurse, noticed that some-

thing was wrong in her body. And even though she noticed that something was wrong, Senator KLOBUCHAR, she literally had to wait for months before she could see a doctor, to save up her money.

And then she finally went and saw a neurologist who said: Do you know what? You have actually had a series of small strokes. And even after getting that diagnosis, she had to put off serious medical procedures because she cannot work as an ER nurse anymore and is still waiting to get approved for disability so she can get Medicaid coverage.

And so this nurse, who has spent her whole life healing other people, can't get healthcare. I think it is wrong that in the richest country on Earth, we don't want to lower the cost of healthcare for people who are working hard in our communities every day, literally keeping us healthy.

I am going to ask you another softball question, Senator BOOKER. Should people like my friend Heather Payne have access to affordable healthcare?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. WARNOCK. In the first few months of the Trump administration, it has been clear that this administration is not working for—

Mr. BOOKER. I am going to just say this just to try to stay in the parliamentary—I yield for a question while retaining the floor. I yield for another question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WARNOCK. The administration is working for the billionaires. They are working for people like Elon Musk. Healthcare is a human right. Healthcare is basic. And while we are speaking about health, we have got to cheer on our Federal workers who are keeping us healthy. And there are folks in this administration who say that they want to make them the villains. That is what Russell Vought said, that "when they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work," our Federal workers, "because they are increasingly viewed," he said, "as the villains."

I have got news for Russell Vought. The people who staff our VA hospitals are not villains. The people who keep our food safe and our water clean are not villains. The people who keep our military bases operating are not villains. And so we stand with them in this moment because they are keeping all of us healthy.

And so in closing—and nobody believes a Baptist preacher when he says in closing—let me say that, again, you are doing holy work here, brother, by holding this floor.

You are literally holding vigil for our Nation. We are beset by the politics of fear. The scripture tells us that perfect love casts out all fear. We are witnessing, again, this ugly game, the politics of us and them.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. WARNOCK. And there are a lot of folks who, because so much of what

has been going on in our Nation across Republican and Democratic administrations—let's be honest—has not been working for ordinary people. And the gap between the haves and the have-nots has gotten larger and larger. And when people are vulnerable, sometimes they give in to the politics of fear, somebody telling them that they have got all the answers.

And so we saw this in this last cycle; we are seeing it in this moment in our country—the politics of us and them. And sadly, hard-working, working-class people are waking up this morning, and they are discovering that they thought they were in the “us,” and they are discovering that they are in the “them.” That the “them” is larger than they thought.

And so we have got to hold vigil for each other, for workers, for women, for immigrants, for immigrant families, for our sisters and our brothers, red, yellow, brown, Black, and White; for the aging who need Social Security; for the working poor who need Medicaid; for those who are seeking asylum and they just need a dignified path; for those who have been working here for years and they need a dignified path to citizenship. We have got to hold vigil for each other.

And so thank you for this work. This is not the end, but the beginning. The struggle continues. Dr. King said that the true measure of a person is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands in moments of challenge and controversy.

So thank you for praying for this Nation with your lips and with your legs. I am going to ask you one last question. Do you intend to keep praying?

Mr. BOOKER. Amen, hallelujah, yes, I do. Thank you for that question.

I know there is going to be a question coming to me, I just want to say pray Isaiah 40:31 for me.

Mr. WARNOCK. Got it, got it. I am going to ordain this man.

Mr. BOOKER. All right. The article I was going to start reading—

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Senator BOOKER.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor. The Senator asked a question. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. So you will yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, while retaining the floor, yes.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Very good. I want to, first of all, thank you, thank you for waking us up this morning, literally. All night as Reverend WARNOCK would tell you, I know you were in here doing your work, but it was raining, there was thunder, it was really bad. And then when we woke up this morning, you were still talking. You were still talking, and the sun was out, and you are giving people hope.

When I think about what you are doing, you are like an alarm clock right now for this country, and, slowly but surely, we have seen people realize, this isn't just a bunch of campaign

rhetoric that is going on, this is actually happening. And people are stepping up. They are fighting it in the courts. They are fighting it in Congress. With what you are doing today, with what—as you know, last week when we got the horrible news that the Defense Secretary of the United States was using an unauthorized line to just talk with his friends like he was spiking a football, about putting the lives of our servicemembers at risk, people stood up. Democrats stood up. They asked the tough questions.

And one of the things that bothers me is that it is so hard to see your way out of it. A lot of people feel like we are just wallowing right now. But what you are telling us today is there is another way. Because if we just wallow, these guys are going to continue to cut kids' cancer treatment. If we just wallow, they are going to cut Medicaid when one out of two seniors in my State who are in assisted living are on Medicaid, or they are going to continue to mess around with these tariffs, which really are national sales tax, something like \$2,500 for every single family.

They are going to continue to be callous. I had someone say to me last night: Do they care? Do they care when those USAID workers who devoted their lives to feeding the hungry around the world, when they have to stand outside the building and watch them literally take the name of their life's work off the brick on that building? Do they care?

And one of the things that we have done—the Democrats have done—has stood up. And what is coming upon us in these next few weeks is this tax bill that, basically, will give billionaires tax cuts on the backs of regular people—ransacking the government, firing veterans, messing around with Social Security.

I had a guy tell me that he spent 3 days after his wife died in Minnesota—3 days—just trying to figure out how he gets the death benefit, why did this dang check show up at his door? He is trying to do the right thing. He calls, he gets put on hold. He sends an e-mail, no one writes him back. He drives into Brainerd, MN, 30-mile drive. He is like 80 years old. He drives in there, and then they finally help him. Then he gets back, and something else goes wrong. Then he tries to call again. Finally, ends up at our door at our office, and we figure it out for him.

There is 70-some million people that that is going to happen to if these guys don't get their act together. So it is a real good question: Do they care? But when we have this tax bill coming up in front of us in these next few weeks, I think people have got to understand what is going on.

They have to understand that even—the thing, the House budget that came out that will be the subject of this, it is over \$2 trillion tax cuts for people making over \$400,000 a year like Elon Musk, that don't need it.

And so there is actually a way to stop it that is in the hands of the Republicans right now.

If just two or three of them stood up on the House floor and did what you did—Senator BOOKER, if they said no, and if four of them in the U.S. Senate, four of them stood up, four Senators stood up, then we could have the discussion about, OK, let's make government work, we are all in, but let's not do it on the backs of regular people. Let's not do it on the backs of kids that are in cancer research or veterans who are trying to simply get their well-earned benefits because they put their lives on the line in the battlefield. Or let's not do it on the backs of farmers in Minnesota and Georgia who simply have these small farms and they are trying to get by. And then, suddenly, wham, Donald Trump decides shock and awe, let's do a tariff and let's get mad at all our allies across the country like Canada. Oh, that is a good idea.

Those are the things they are doing. So my question of you is, how many people need to stand up in the U.S. Senate to make this happen? Because I know Democrats are united. I know we are all standing up, but tell me how many people need to stand up on the other side, if they joined up and joined you, what a difference it would make? (Mr. RICKETTS assumed the Chair.)

Mr. BOOKER. So I want to thank the Senator for the question, and when I think of people who stand in adversity, I still see you standing in a snowstorm and the strength that you have had and stood up to fight for affordable healthcare, stood up and fought for affordable prescription drugs, stood up and fought for farmers and police officers and communities.

You are that kind of person that gives me strength that I have learned so much from. And you have brought this issue up, what you just said on the floor, to let you know, this is not performative for her. She has brought this up in our small meetings with CHUCK SCHUMER. She has brought this up in our caucus meetings. I have seen her talk about it in her own State. This question of what will it take?

And here is something that pains me to hear, that Elon Musk is calling Republicans up and saying: If you take this stand, I am going to put \$100 million in a primary against you, that they are bullying people who dare to stand up and say, maybe this appointee is not the most qualified person you could find to lead this Cabinet position, or maybe it is wrong to cut this Agency that we together created in Congress.

There are people who are asking those questions, but we have seen them get dragged through X, mob attacked when it comes to their virtual presence, and threatened to be primaried.

But we know, because you are somebody that works on both sides of the aisle, that there are really good people of conscience on both sides of the aisle.

And as the great pastor said: There are enough sins in this body to go around for all of us.

But this is not a partisan moment; it is a moral moment. This is not a left or right moment; it is a right or wrong moment.

Mr. WARNOCK. Right.

Mr. BOOKER. We have a President that is shredding the very Agencies that Americans who are struggling are relying on.

Working people that, over the last 71 days, are finding higher prices, that are finding housing prices go up. Farmers in your State—my State too; it is our fourth largest industry. I have had farmers come to me from as far away as Texas and tell me: They are clawing back these contracts that we have already relied on to buy things, and now you are putting me in a situation where I might lose my farm.

You see veterans who come to our offices—I know they come to your office, Senator KLOBUCHAR; you are a Senator from Minnesota, but you are a national figure, so I know they are coming to your office—and they are saying things to me like: I am a veteran. I could go do other jobs. I wanted to work on suicide prevention and mental health issues, and I am being fired?

And you said it right. I have heard you say it in private. I have heard you say it in public. I know it irks you because you are one of those sort of balanced people. OK, we have a big deficit. That is a real problem. Maybe they are trying to lower the deficit, but they are not. That is the irony. They are not. They are about to explode trillions of dollars, most of which disproportionately goes to the wealthiest people, as you have been pointing out in our private phone calls over and over again, Senator KLOBUCHAR.

So your question to me is spot on. It is spot on. And it is why I am standing here right now at the top of another hour, because of what you are saying relentlessly, persistently, and unyieldingly.

Why are we hurting American farmers? We just talked about rural hospitals here for about 20, 30 minutes and what the threats are to them. We talked about rural Social Security centers and the threats that are to them. We talked about communities all over our country that are being hurt. And your question, why? To give tax breaks that will disproportionately go to the wealthiest Americans.

You and I are not those people that demonize wealth. We don't demonize success. I want more people to start businesses. I want more people to dream of moving on up like the Jeffersons. I want more people to have that vision. I am not one of those people that are going to be mad at you because you are very successful. I am going to be one of those people that say: You don't need more tax cuts.

We as a society have an obligation to each other, to those farmers, to those rural folks, to the cops I stood with at

the funeral of one of their colleagues in Newark 2 weeks ago. We have an obligation to them to help them get equipment to protect themselves.

This country cannot do something that is so monumentally fiscally irresponsible.

Who was the one person in the House that voted—a Republican that voted against it? A guy named MASSIE? And I watched. I had to smile and laugh because he said the quiet part out loud. He was sitting there looking at something. I saw him in an interview. He said: By their own numbers, this doesn't add up. They are adding to our deficit by the trillions.

He stayed true to his principles.

What happened to all those mighty deficit hawks in the House of Representatives on the Republican side that caved to the pressure of a President?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BOOKER. So happy you asked it in the right fashion.

I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Very good. That was perfect.

So I think one of the things you talked about was just this deficit and what is happening and what we are seeing with their proposal that is going to come right before us. By some estimates, it is going to add \$37 trillion—\$37 trillion in 30 years as we go ahead. I mean, I literally cannot believe that when, in fact, we could step back now, and we can say: What things can we do? What things can we do on the Tax Code? There are a whole lot of things we can do to strengthen Social Security, strengthen what we have in our government.

When you step back and look at the economy—and I heard this the other day on a business channel. Just about a month or two ago, man, we were coming out strong. We are a country that came out of the pandemic in a stronger way than so many other countries did around the world. We are ready. Inflation was at least steady, and it was starting to come down here. Now, all of a sudden, we see chaos is up, corruption is up, and, yes, costs are up. Ask anyone at the grocery store.

One of the problems when you look at what we could be doing to address the debt is that the proposals out there are just going to make it worse. That means more interest payments. That means more interest payments on the backs of regular people. That means there is less we can do to help them as we look at what is happening now.

One of the things you raised, Senator BOOKER—and I appreciate how much you know about this—is just this prescription drug negotiation and Medicare. So what do we finally do?

Decades before you or Senator MURPHY or Senator WARNOCK got here, before I even got to this place, they made a sweetheart deal with the pharmaceutical companies, and they actually

baked in so they didn't have to negotiate prices for 73 million people on anything. They could just charge whatever they wanted for these prescription drugs.

What happened? Well, guess what happened. Suddenly, the drugs for seniors are 2 to 1 what they are in places like Canada—our neighbor, our friend—2 to 1 what they are over there. You have people driving up to Canada from Minnesota because we can see Canada from our porch, and they are going up there, trying to get less expensive drugs.

What is going on? So a whole bunch of people started to say: Let's look at this. It took years to get this done. Finally—finally—we passed a bill that said they have to negotiate, and we took the first 10 drugs. The last administration got to pick those drugs, and they picked blockbuster drugs—drugs like Eliquis, drugs like Xarelto, drugs like Januvia, Jardiance. I memorize them because I can always find people that take them. I don't make them raise their hands if they take them. But these are blockbuster drugs, and they reduced the price by like 70 percent for our seniors. That is going to kick in soon, but not if this administration messes it up.

What we have seen is everything from giving Signal lines about secret battle plans to reporters to deciding they are going to shut down the people that worked on protecting our nuclear facilities and then, oops, we made a mistake. How about when they said: We want to do something about avian flu, but we are going to fire all the people that work there. Oh, no, we are going to hire them back. That is what has been going on right now.

So when I look at this really complicated prescription drug negotiation where you are taking on some of the biggest companies in the world, I look at it and say to myself: OK. So our Secretary of Health, Kennedy—he won't even agree when he is asked under oath if he is going to keep this up. They fired a bunch of people that would work on it. They haven't shown they are going to keep this negotiation going.

Meanwhile, we have put in place a \$2,000 cap for our seniors out-of-pocket on drug costs under Medicare. That is really good. We put in place that insulin limit, 35 bucks a month.

We thank Reverend WARNOCK, and we thank you, Senator BOOKER, Senator MURPHY, and everyone that worked on that. We got that in place.

So now we have the big thing, which is the negotiation of all these drugs, because 15 more drugs are coming our way for negotiations, again blockbuster drugs—Ozempic—blockbuster drugs. Those drugs are coming their way for negotiations, but they have not committed to do that. They have not committed to do that. Even if they did commit to do it, do they even have the people to negotiate, to take on these major companies?

So my question to you, Senator BOOKER, after being up all night, after getting us through the storm of last night and into the bright sunshine of today, after holding the floor all this time—I can't even imagine how much your feet must hurt, but those hurting feet are nothing compared to why you are doing it, to how the rest of the people in the country—how they are hurting.

My question is, How can they move forward without trying to save money for the people of this country? Because what I see happening—and there are so many signs. You see it every single day. When they are getting rid of some of the people who work on it, then you are not going to be able to get the Social Security for my friend that I met from Crosslake, MN; then you are not going to be able to get that stuff done.

But I think, as we look at those cuts, it is not just the word “cut”; it is, what effect does it have on real people when they can't get their services, when our veterans, who also have complex ways that they have to deal with the government, have no one answering the phone, when they have gotten rid of veterans that have actually done the work? So my question here for people who translate this into the real world is, What is all this going to mean for people in the real world, what they are doing right now?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you for the question, Senator KLOBUCHAR. I love that you are bringing it back to real people and what effect it is having.

What you are spelling out is something that is really important. There is a strategy that they have expressly said: They want to overwhelm you—not us. They want to overwhelm the American people. They want to flood the zone.

So I see a whole bunch of trying to do things to distract us: Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of America, Greenland—all these things to try to whip us up and not pay attention to what most Americans are concerned with: Can they make ends meet?

Even the big reconciliation bill that they are going to try to do that we have to find a way to appeal to a small group of Republican Congresspeople to stop the cutting of \$880 million out of Medicaid—we went through in great detail at length last night why that is bad, but you are pointing to something even more insidious, which is that big things are going on. They actually are cutting the support to get more people signed up with the ACA—already happened. Make it harder to sign up for the ACA. They have already cut the tax credits that are helping people that are in the ACA get resources to help with their healthcare costs. They are going after these things.

Here is one that you know really well. They are going after—as we talk about all of these parents struggling with children and family members with chronic diseases, we know one of the things that help people with chronic

diseases is having access to fresh, healthy foods. But they are cutting access to that for our kids going to school.

This administration has not only overseen in 71 days a rise in inflation, a rise in the cost of groceries, a lowering of people's 401(K)s with the stock market going on; it is not only bringing economic chaos, but they are already hurting people on the basic delivery of their services—from taking thousands of jobs out of Social Security, making it harder for people who have some problem to get it solved, to the VA, to the ACA.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will definitely yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I was thinking—as you talked about the Affordable Care Act and all the work that went into it and what came out of it, I was remembering the constant attempts to repeal that bill. I was remembering when Senator John McCain—I think you were here for this—came in and kind of did the unexpected, right? He came in here, he bucked his party, and he said no. He didn't agree with Donald Trump about this. He didn't agree with his leaders on this. He did what he thought was right.

My issue is that we all have those moments where we have to make decisions about what we think is right.

And I think about Donald Trump and he is—just now, just this week, he said he wanted to violate the Constitution, which he said practically every single hour, but he said that he would try to serve another term and that he would do this, he would do that. He is literally treating this Presidency like he is the King, and I guess Elon Musk is the court jester at his side or the White House IT guy. But the point is that he is treating this like a King.

You serve on the Judiciary Committee, and you are a student of history. You are also a scholar in terms of understanding this government and how it works. I think one of the things that are most unsettling for people, that they just don't understand, is, how you could have a President in place that doesn't respect that democracy?

I remember when we all gathered for the inauguration, and I had 4 minutes, because of my job with the Rules Committee, to address those gathered in that Rotunda. I noted that our democracy can be a hot mess right now, but it is still the best form of government that we have, that our democracy is truly our shelter in the storm. It is our shelter in the storm, to quote a great songwriter from the State of Minnesota.

The reason we don't have—I know you may have a few songwriters from there. If the Senator could yield for one question, who is your best songwriter and singer from the State of New Jersey? Just to make clear who it is.

Mr. BOOKER. Is that your question?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Do you yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will answer that question by avoiding it because in New Jersey, there are so many great patron saints, from the great Bon Jovi, to the great Bruce Springsteen, to the incredible Queen Latifah, to the “Chairman of the Board” from New Jersey, the great Frank Sinatra. So I am not going to pick. We have so many great singers, rappers like Redman. We are just a thriving State of—Count Basie. There are just too many. I would not force you to do that. Of course, if it is Prince—

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Prince and Bob Dylan. But that aside, I am very impressed, Senator BOOKER, that after, what, 12 hours now, 13 hours, you still are able to make sure that you mentioned every songwriter.

But that aside, Bob Dylan once had that great line, “shelter in the storm.” Our democracy is a shelter in a storm.

Then I noted that in some countries, Presidential inaugurations are held in gilded palaces—not in the United States of America. In the United States of America, it is held in the people's House.

That is what you are doing right now, Senator BOOKER. Because the people's House is where the action should be. That is article I, and the Constitution specifically says here that we have equal branches of government.

And the final thing is that the power in that Rotunda that day—and this is where we get into Donald Trump thinking he is King. The power of that Rotunda didn't come from the people in there. It came from the people outside. That is why you see the people standing up right now—our constituents going to these townhalls, standing up, breaking the phone lines in the U.S. Senate, sending in the emails with their stories that you have heard from the Senators and that have read on the Senate floor about things that have happened to your constituents. That is the power from the outside.

The question that I ask of you is just tell me what you think people can do when you have a President in there that he thinks he is King and he thinks that a democracy is just something that he can shove aside and say whatever he wants and break every rule that people depend on, that they depend on to be able to vote and participate and have their case made. Tell me what you think. What is the answer to that?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you, Senator. I will answer that.

I see RON WYDEN has come to the floor—for both Amy and me, one of the chair people or, at this point, the ranking member of one of the great committees.

To AMY KLOBUCHAR's question, I read a lot of angry letters—people who were demanding of me to do something to stop them—do something different: Stand up. Speak up, Senator. I am afraid.

Stand up. Speak up, Senator. I am so angry.

Stand up. Speak up, Senator. The services for my disabled child are threatened.

Stand up, speak up.

That is one of the reasons I am doing this, why my staff and I talked about this for so many days. Do something to show, to let our constituents know, to elevate their voices on the floor, to read their letters, to read their statements. It is not just New Jerseyans like you, but hundreds and hundreds of people who are calling us from other States.

But I am most moved by the letters that tell me about their pain or their challenges or their fears. But they end that question with your question: I am here to help. Tell me how I can help.

I am here to help. Tell me how I can help.

And you said it, Senator.

I read the letter of John McCain last night, his letter explaining his vote. It was so beautiful. It was tough, like he was. It was hard on the whole body. But he called to principles. Senator SCHUMER was here when I read it. It was eerie because he was describing what was wrong then, which is the same thing here—that we do need to make our country better. We do need to have a bolder vision for healthcare, a bolder vision for Social Security. We need to make them work for the people, but we are not doing it here in this body.

And this man who is not acting like a President but is trashing our constitutional traditions, violating our laws, as he is getting tied up in court but ignoring court orders—and when he gets a decision he doesn't like, he trashes the judges so badly that the Supreme Court itself finds that it has to go out and tell him to stop it.

What stopped healthcare from being taken away the last time wasn't the persuasive powers of anybody on this side of the political aisle of the Senate convincing anybody over there. I would like to think it was my eloquence for LISA MURKOWSKI. I would like to think it was my high-minded intellect that, somehow, was damaged playing too much football, but that, somehow, I got the right argument to SUSAN COLLINS. That wasn't it. I would like to think it was my ability to stand up to John McCain, himself. No, none of that. It was the people. It was the people.

You remember the little lobbyists in their wheelchairs, rolling up to Senators and speaking their heart, telling them their pain, their fear. It was people coming here and marching; people coming and flooding the calls, like they are doing now; people writing letters; people marching; people in their States, from all political spectrums, coming in and saying: This is wrong. This is wrong. This is wrong.

And so if you are asking me what we can do, I know what we can do, but we have to, as the great song—Senator

KLOBUCHAR, I had my staff print a bunch of statements I sent them. I sent them because I knew they were some of my favorite people from history. There is one here by Webster, one by Jefferson, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Langston Hughes, something by Harper Lee, Emma Lazarus.

But here is one. Here is the answer in a poem. And forgive me for reading this. I wanted to do it at some point today. This is perfect. I see my Senator here may have a question. But I love this poem. It was written and put to song by a man named James Weldon Johnson. He was an educator, a poet, a civil rights activist. He was born in the great State of Florida. He said that this is what we have to do: "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Lift every voice and sing,
Till Earth and Heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
[We must] sing a song full of the faith that
the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that present
has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of a new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

It doesn't ignore the wretchedness of our history. It speaks to the truth and the excitement and the hope about that past and the virtues that our ancestors gave us. It goes on:

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had
died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers
sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears
has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through
the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of the bright star is
cast.

The last stanza:

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the
way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the night,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our
God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to [this] our native land.

What can we do? Do like our ancestors did. What can we do? Do like the people who never gave up, even when this country they loved didn't love them back. They kept fighting, kept pushing.

Senator KLOBUCHAR, in my time in the Senate with you, we have seen some of the most amazing, shocking moments with the Obergefell case in the Supreme Court recognizing the humanity, the dignity, the equal rights of

the LGBTQ Americans to have love and marry.

We have seen fights, in this time that we have been here, where we have seen victories on healthcare that made such a difference in people's lives. We have seen the fights while we have been here, some of the most painful moments, where we have seen the arc of the moral universe bent not by the people here, not by the people in this body. Do you think we got suffrage because a bunch of men on the Senate floor said: OK, guys, come on. Put your hands in here. Ready to give women the right to vote on three. Ready, break.

That is not how it happened. That is not how it happened. The power of the people is greater than the people in power.

Do you think we got civil rights because one day, Strom Thurmond, after filibustering for 24 hours—do you think we got civil rights because he came to the floor one day and said: I have seen the light. Let those Negro people have the right to vote.

No, we got civil rights because people marched for it, sweat for it, and John Lewis bled for it.

So I am scared too. But fear is a necessary precondition to courage. I am angry too. But my mom told me: Never let your anger consume you. Channel it. Fuel it so it can help your love be greater and stronger.

AMY KLOBUCHAR, that is what this moment needs. Our job in this body is to be truth tellers. Our job, just as you said so brilliantly, is to elevate the voices of the people of the country.

You are right, AMY KLOBUCHAR. This is the people's House. It is article I of the Constitution, and it is under assault. Article I is under assault. Our spending powers, our budgetary powers, the power to establish Agencies like the Department of Education and USAID—it is under assault by a President that doesn't respect this document.

And how do we stop them? I am sorry to say, we hold powerful positions. We were elected by great States, but we are in the minority right now. You spelled it out in the beginning of your questions to me. It will take three people of conscience on that side. It will take four here.

I am going back to my book because there is somebody that you know—I don't know if my staff put it in at the last moment. Yes, they did—Margaret Chase Smith, whom you know.

Margaret Chase Smith, a U.S. Senator from Maine, a Republican. When a demagogue rose in the land exploiting people's fear, deporting Jews who were not citizens of this country because they were accusing them of being Communists, at a time that this body was being twisted and contorted to the will of a demagogue, where nobody had the courage to stand up, it was a woman from the Republican Party that stood—I don't know—somewhere in this body.

Her feet might have been tired. Her heart might have been hurt. She might

have been afraid of the consequences to stand up to people preaching the Red Scare. But this woman in this body, a rare thing in those years—this woman in this body, which our Founders—to those imperfect geniuses who wrote this Constitution, a woman in this body wasn't imagined by our Founders. Thank God they called upon us to make a more perfect Union. And generations of activists finally made it real that women could serve in this body. She had the courage, the audacity to call her own party to task.

I read her words. She said:

I don't believe that the Republican party is in any sense a party of fear, but I do believe that the Republican Party has made an alliance with the Four Horsemen of fear—the fear of communism, the fear of labor unions, the fear of the future, the fear of progress. I think it is high time that we remembered that we have sworn to uphold and defend the Constitution.

She continues:

I think that it is high time that we remembered that the Constitution, as amended, speaks not only of the freedom of speech but also the freedom of trial by [jury].

This great Senator, this great Republican, said:

Whether it is criminal prosecutions in the court or character prosecutions in the Senate, there is little political distinction when the life of a person has been ruined.

Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism in making character assassinations are all too frequently those who, by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles [of what it means to be an American]—the right to criticize.

Without thinking the President is going to drag you from the Oval Office for criticizing him.

The right to hold unpopular beliefs.

That if you have a belief I find contemptible, it does not mean I can disappear you from a city street.

She goes on:

The right to protest.

That just for assembly and speaking up, that is not a right to cut hundreds of billions of dollars for universities' science funding.

The right to independent thought.

The exercise of these rights should not cost one single American citizen his reputation or his right to a livelihood nor should he be in danger of losing his reputation or livelihood merely because he happens to know someone who holds unpopular beliefs.

Like a law firm that represents suing the President and now has their very firm, their very livelihoods, the legal secretaries and others come after them.

Margaret Chase Smith goes on to call her party to be a woman of conscience; to stand up and say "the American people are sick and tired of being afraid to speak their minds lest they be politically smeared as 'Communists' or 'Fascists' by their opponents. Freedom of speech," she says, "is not what it used to be in America. It has been so abused by some that it is not exercised by others."

Dear God, if I stand up in this body and say it is wrong to put Pete Hegseth

in the Cabinet as Secretary of Defense because he is unqualified—he is unqualified; he is unqualified—look at a Signal chat to see how unqualified he is.

Margaret Chase Smith continues:

As a Republican, I say to my colleagues on this side of the aisle that the Republican party faces a challenge today that is not unlike the challenge it faced back in Lincoln's day. The Republican party so successfully met that challenge that it emerged from the Civil War as the champion of a united nation—in addition to being the party which unrelentingly fought loose spending and loose programs.

I doubt if the Republican Party could—simply because I don't believe the American people will uphold any political party that puts political exploitation above national interest. Surely we Republicans aren't that desperate for victory.

I don't want to see the Republican Party win that way. While it might be a fleeting victory for the Republican Party, it would be a more lasting defeat for the American people. Surely it would ultimately be suicide for the Republican Party and the two-party system [itself] that has protected our American liberties from the dictatorship of a one-party system.

You ask me, AMY KLOBUCHAR, what do we need to do? We need to call to the conscience of our comrades in the people's branch and say: How could you go along with a reconciliation that will put trillions of dollars of debt on our children and our children's children? How could you go along with cutting \$800 billion for Medicaid only to give tax cuts to the wealthiest, to disproportionately go to the wealthiest? How could you, in good conscience—if you are a fiscal hawk, if you are a Christian conservative, how could you hurt the weak to benefit the rich and powerful? That is the answer to your question.

The people of the United States of America—all of us—have to stand up and say: No, not on my watch. I am a Republican; I am a veteran; I am a police officer; I am a firefighter; I am a teacher—not in America. We won't allow this. We won't allow this. We won't allow this.

Mr. WYDEN. Will the Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleague.

I have been listening to this, a Herculean presentation, for hours and hours. Your remarks reflect the urgency of our times, Senator BOOKER, and I thank you for it.

Let me frame the question this way: I hold open-to-all townhall meetings in every county in my State each year. I have had more than 1,100 of them. And since Donald Trump took office, what we have seen in these townhall meetings is fear and terror, and, I might add, record turnouts.

I was in a small town in central Oregon recently, Sisters. We had almost 1,400 people there. And what people asked about and you have touched on this morning, is, of course, Medicaid and Social Security because these are

programs involving healthcare and retirement that are really the connective tissue between the government and our people.

These programs make it possible for people to pay for essentials. They are not going to fancy places. They are buying groceries. They are paying rent. They are buying medicine.

We had one separate townhall meeting, I say to my colleague, just with Federal employees whose goal is to get out in the woods and help prevent fire in Oregon. I organized this meeting. They, too, are terrified. They have dedicated their lives to trying to help.

We serve the American people. And I am telling you, I have seen service in action over the last few hours with your reflecting the urgency of our times. Our salaries are paid for by taxpayers, and I am particularly troubled by the fact that we are getting all these reports that many Senators are saying: I am not going to do townhall meetings.

They are on the other side of the aisle. As I said, I have had 1,100 of them, 10 of them so far this year. It seems to me, that is refusing to answer to constituents.

You have been here all night, and you are setting a very clear example about what it means to push back against authoritarianism.

So just like I have townhall meetings, my question to my friend from New Jersey is, What are you hearing from home? It is a pretty straightforward question, but it sure as heck is what the times are all about because people are saying: What are you doing back there? What is important to you?

I talk about town meetings. I had a tele-townhall, I say to my friend, during the speech that was being made on the floor of the House. I had 30,000 people participating. That is a lot for my small State. So I know what I am doing, and I think the American people would like to hear a bit about what my colleague is hearing from his State and why it is so important that he is out here mopping his brow today trying to stay on his feet, making the case for the urgency of our time. What are you hearing?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

I am hearing a lot of fear, a lot of anger. I am hearing heads of hospitals say that this is outrageous, the threats to our hospitals in New Jersey. I am hearing heads of critical health services tell me what the Medicaid cuts will mean to their organizations. I am hearing from Catholic priests who are doing extraordinary things in service of their communities. I am hearing from citizens who are veterans who got fired from their jobs.

I am hearing from people, as I read letters, who work in the Social Security Agency and the chaos that has been created and the deteriorating service to seniors. I have heard from seniors who are terrified about what is being done to Social Security and how it might affect their lives.

I am hearing demands from our constituents, people demanding, Senator, that we do something about the outrages they are seeing.

I think that when I hear New Jerseyans, by larger and larger numbers—and I will be back in my State. I know we were planning meetings and a townhall and a lot more this weekend. But I have to say now, more than ever, we need more of it. We need more of it.

And one of the reasons I am here is because I want to elevate those voices of my constituents. I want to tell the stories that my constituents are writing in about and lift their voices and tell them that they are seen; they are heard.

I have been going through section by section, as you pointed out: Social Security, a section on healthcare, a section on education and the Department of Education and the work that it does. I have been going point by point through.

This is the agenda. I didn't know how much of it I could get through. But we laid it out. We have binders for each one of these issues. Immigration, we went through. We have housing, the environment, farmers and food, veterans, the corruption that has been normalized by this President, the rule of law, public safety—all the ways that we know that there is a crisis in our country, and we, as a nation, need to be more attuned to it and doing more to meet this crisis, to rise up and defend our country, defend our well-being.

And all the while, things are happening that you know. You are the chairman of the Finance Committee, and you have these insights. We have talked about them, about what is about to happen in this reconciliation process. I mean, that is one of the more stunning things that is almost immediate on this floor.

I think we are going to see about the tariffs tomorrow and see how far the President will go. But we do know, whatever it is, it is going to affect prices that are going to continue to go up for Americans. This inflation has continued to go up for Americans as the stock market continues to go down, as people's 401(k)s have lost so much money.

The uncertainty I am hearing from businesses in New Jersey, the chaos that they feel about the economy—the consumer confidence in this country has gone way down.

If you ask the question: Are you better off than you were 71 days ago, not many Americans could say that they are better off. Their costs are higher. Their groceries are higher. They are soon to see everything from car prices to food go higher. Their retirement security is under attack. Their healthcare is under attack. They are losing their Department of Education. They are less safe from infectious diseases abroad. There are so many things that we have to talk to and try to stop.

You are our leader on the Finance Committee, and you know that the tax

thing they are trying to run through now. I am trying to get my head wrapped around these whacky parliamentary things that even the podcast I listen to in the morning to inform me say they even spoke about this years and years ago. But they said, oh, this is too crazy. We can't do this, to try to tell the American people somehow that the trillions of dollars of tax cuts that we are going to give disproportionately to the wealthiest people of all, oh, there is nothing to see here; that has a zero impact on the budget, so we can do it through reconciliation. That is the biggest hocus-pocus, manufactured artifice that I have ever seen to obscure the truth in America.

What the Republicans are trying to do is cut massively into healthcare for Americans in order to give tax cuts disproportionately to the wealthiest who don't need it and to drive up the deficits, making our children and our children's children have a more dangerous economy and higher and higher debt payments to make—debt payments that will skyrocket higher than any expense the government makes.

We are literally about to see something go through reconciliation that threatens to sacrifice our children's future so that the richest of the rich can get richer.

I know there are a lot of people who are angry, who are worried, who are feeling overwhelmed, who are struggling to make ends meet. But I know of only one way to do this—and I am trying to do it myself—is to do things differently, to stand up, to speak up, to not act like this is just normal in our country.

There is not a President, from Eisenhower to Reagan to Bush, on the Republican side who could ever imagine a day where, in a U.N. vote, we side with Russia and China against the Western democracies that we saved in World War II; that we stormed the beaches of Normandy for; that we did the Berlin airlift for; that we did the Marshall Plan for.

We designed the world order, and now we are turning our back on it. We designed the rules-based world order, and we are turning our back on those organizations, from trashing NATO to getting out of the World Health Organization, to getting out of the group of countries coming together to deal with climate change.

We are not leading the planet Earth anymore. Our allies are saying openly they can't trust us. The quotes are unbelievable by our allies:

Generations of Americans all know one thing: Russia is our adversary. This principle was reinforced after Russia's brutal, unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022.

The American public knows a lot about Putin and his cronies and what they have done to the brave people of Ukraine. Russia has abducted over 19,000 children, taking them from their families and homeland.

Russia has targeted civilians, bombing hospitals and schools, including a strike on a children's hospital during the supposed cease-fire negotiations just a few weeks ago.

Russian forces have raped and assaulted Ukrainian civilians, and Russia has tortured prisoners of war.

One would think, given all the horrors inflicted by Russia, that the United States would continue to treat Russia as the adversary and the pariah as other Western democracies treat it. But that is not what Trump has done. He has done the opposite.

On the third anniversary of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, the administration joined Russia and North Korea in voting against the resolution condemning the innovation that has killed over 12,000 Ukrainian civilians and injured 30,000. Imagine that.

I had the Foreign Minister of a great ally in NATO in my office looking at me and saying, basically, What the heck?

My friend CHRIS MURPHY, on the floor, we sit close to each other. He is further up the dais than I in Foreign Relations, and this stuff is insanity.

Here is NBC News:

President Donald Trump has said Ukraine—not Russia—started the war. He's called [the] Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy—not Vladimir Putin—[he called Zelenskyy] a dictator. Meanwhile, Trump's administration is standing down on a suite of tough anti-Kremlin policies.

In just over a month, Trump has executed a startling realignment of American foreign policy, effectively throwing U.S. support behind Moscow and rejecting the tight alliance with Kyiv cultivated by former President Joe Biden.

The extraordinary pivot has upended decades of hawkish foreign policy toward Russia that provided a rare area of bipartisan consensus in an increasingly divided nation. Trump's recent moves have drawn international attention, unsettling U.S. allies in Europe and thrilling conservative populists who favor a turn away from Zelenskyy.

The new posture was put in stark relief on Friday during a tense Oval Office meeting—

We all remember this—

between Trump and Zelenskyy. The leaders clashed in front of the press, raising questions about the future of American support for Kyiv.

Alliances and partners around the world are our biggest strength against any U.S. adversary or competitor, from China to Russia to Iran to North Korea. We are the strongest Nation on the planet Earth, but our strength is multiplied and magnified when we stand in alliance with those nations that share our values and are bonded to us and are committed to us.

In fact, the only time article 5 in the United Nations—that article that says that if one person in NATO is attacked, everyone is attacked and they all join together—that one time it happened was 9/11, when our NATO allies stood up with America.

And so look at NATO. It has been the bedrock of the international order for 80 years. It was created in 1949 by 12 countries, including the United States,

to provide collective security and, in many ways, provide collective security against the Soviet Union. Since then, 20 more countries have joined NATO through 10 rounds of enlargement, bringing the total number of NATO countries to 32. The most recent additions were Sweden in 2024 and Finland in 2023, who applied to join NATO in 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, because those countries are realizing that the authoritarian dictator that Putin is—who threatens his smaller neighbors—those other nations have realized they should be standing with NATO; that we have a principle of collective defense, as I said, enshrined in article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. “Collective defense” means an attack on one ally is considered an attack against all allies.

A strong NATO has made America safer and stronger and more prosperous. My colleagues on both sides of the aisle recognize this. I have been in this body for 12 years. I have been told by people who I have learned from about foreign policy when I came here as a mayor and leaned on people like CHRIS COONS and leaned on people like CHRIS MURPHY, leaned on people like John McCain, leaned on people like LINDSEY GRAHAM, leaned on people like Senator Rubio.

We helped pass a law that enshrined congressional action before the President can withdraw from NATO. That law passed with overwhelming bipartisan support—87 Senators voted yes.

Senator Rubio, now Secretary of State, said:

NATO serves as an essential military alliance that protects shared military interests and enhances America’s international presence. Any decision to leave the alliance should be rigorously debated and considered by the U.S. Congress with the input of the American people.

Two weeks ago, though, on March 19, 2025, in response to news that the Pentagon may give up the role of supreme allied commander in Europe, a position held by an American general since the NATO alliance was formed in 1949, Republican Senator WICKER and Representative ROGERS signaled their opposition in an extraordinary joint statement warning Donald Trump that that change would “risk undermining American deterrence around the globe.”

I want to read some of the comments of NATO partners about the damage that has been done in just the last 71 days of Trump’s leadership in upending the world order that has helped to keep America stronger and safer and more prosperous.

The EU’s top diplomat said “the free world needs a new leader.” Think about that. Think about that. The EU’s top diplomat has said, in response to Donald Trump, that now the free world needs a new leader.

Every President of my lifetime has seen as the leader of the free world, and now the rest of the free world, its top diplomat, is saying it is time for that to change.

The new German Chancellor said:

My absolute priority will be to strengthen Europe as quickly as possible so that, step by step, we can really achieve independence from the USA.

He went on to say:

I never thought I would have to say something like this on a television program. But after Donald Trump’s statements last week at the latest, it is clear that the Americans, at least this part of the Americans, this administration, are largely indifferent to the fate of Europe.

Our ancestors saved Europe. Our ancestors stormed beaches in Normandy, paratrooped into Europe, liberated concentration camps. Our ancestors sacrificed blood and treasure for Europe. It turned Germany from one of history’s worst despotic states into a global economic power and a democracy.

We were there at the Berlin airlift. We were there for the Marshall Plan. And now Europe is saying:

It is clear that the Americans, at least this part of the Americans, this administration, are largely indifferent to the fate of Europe.

That is not true. That is not true. And as long as I have breath in my body and blood in my veins, I will join with the other people on both sides of the aisle—God bless you, ROGER WICKER—for standing with the understanding that America is the strongest Nation in the world, but our strength is multiplied and magnified when we stand with our allies, from Germany to Japan, from Australia to Iceland; that when our country stands up, we don’t bully our neighbors like Canada. We don’t threaten our allies like Iceland, like Greenland. We don’t threaten smaller, weaker nations like Panama. We don’t upend the world order.

Donald Trump does not speak for me. He does not speak for the traditions of this body. He doesn’t speak for the people that are buried—Americans that are buried in fields in Germany and in France and all over Europe.

Here is former Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin’s speech to NATO and the Atlantic Council.

On April 4, 1949 . . . 12 democracies came together in the wake of two world wars and at the dawn of a new Cold War. They all remembered, as President Truman put it, “the sickening blow of unprovoked aggression.”

That is what Truman said. They were coming together against the sickening blow of unprovoked aggression.

Do you hear that, Putin?

So they vowed to stand together for their collective defense and to safeguard freedom and democracy across Europe and North America. They made a solemn commitment, declaring that an armed attack against one ally would be considered “an attack against them all.”

Now that commitment was enshrined in Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty. It was the foundation of NATO. And it still is.

On that bedrock, we have built the strongest and most successful defensive alliance in human history.

And, I will say, one of the most prosperous blocs of democratic countries.

Throughout the Cold War, NATO deterred Soviet aggression against Western Europe—

and prevented a third world war. In the 1990s, NATO used air power to stop ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. And the day after September 11, 2001, when al-Qaeda terrorists attacked our country, including slamming a plane into the Pentagon—

Not far from here—

NATO invoked Article Five for the first and only time in its history.

Mr. COONS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question. While retaining the floor, I yield to one of my best friends in the Senate. I yield to one of the smartest guys I know. I yield to the guy who handed me the chairmanship of the committee that oversaw world public health and Africa and still reminds me that he knows more Swahili than I will ever know.

I yield to the guy who when he speaks up in the Senate, people on both sides of the aisle listen. I yield to my friend who has real friendships, who when I came to him and said: We are seeing the worst famines on the planet Earth; that Joe Biden didn’t put enough money into the World Food Programme, he went to another appropriator over there, another friend of ours, LINDSEY GRAHAM, and together we got billions of dollars of more that saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

You are a prince of a man. You are my friend. You are somebody that is a hero, who folks don’t know their name and the countries that you have affected with your strength on foreign policy.

Dear God, my friend, I yield the floor for a question, while retaining the floor. Excuse me. I want to say that correctly. I yield for a question while retaining the floor. I do not yield the floor.

Mr. COONS. I ask my friend and colleague from New Jersey if he is familiar with Psalm 30:5.

Mr. BOOKER. Not at this moment.

Mr. COONS. And if not, I offer to repeat it because I think it speaks to this moment.

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

Now, this is a holy month. It is the month of Lent. It is the month of Ramadan. It is the period of reflection preceding Passover. And my question to my colleague is rooted in a scripture in the Psalms known to both of us, one widely engaged in, in these days:

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

This is a reminder both of the possibility of redemption, of the urgency of hope, and of your nightlong sacrifice on this floor.

Let me ask, if I might, two more questions of my friend and colleague. To my colleague from New Jersey: Are you familiar with a front-page story on the Washington Post entitled “Trump’s USAID cuts cripple American response to Myanmar earthquake,” an article running today in the Washington Post?

Mr. BOOKER. I have not read the paper this day.

Mr. COONS. I had suspected that that might be the case, given that my colleague from New Jersey has dedicated his night to standing tall and fighting hard to make sure that the people of the United States know what is going on.

I will share with you, just for a moment, that it hurt my heart to watch the national evening news last night and see a Chinese humanitarian emergency response team celebrated as they pulled survivors out of the earthquake rubble in Myanmar. It did not hurt my heart that there are Chinese nationals providing emergency relief, but it hurt my heart that exactly those people who are the very best in the world at responding to humanitarian crisis, exactly those people had just received termination letters and their work with USAID had just been suspended.

Normally, in every humanitarian crisis I have known in my lifetime, the first in are the men and women of USAID and the U.S. Armed Forces. Whether a tsunami, a tornado, wildfires, or an earthquake, we had world-leading humanitarian response capabilities.

And I think it is a tragedy—and it is reflected in both this article that I have asked my colleague about and in the response of the world—that we have created an enormous opening for the PRC to come in and do what we previously did so well.

Let me ask another question, if I might, of my colleague: Are you familiar with what has just happened to food banks all over our Nation in terms of an announcement about impending deliveries of badly needed surplus food? This, I suspect, will be the focus of your future comments on agriculture, but I mention it as something that has impacted my State and, I suspect, yours as well.

Mr. BOOKER. First of all, I want to say this is when, when you ask me a question—to yield for a question—I want to say I yield for a question while retaining the floor, and I want to say to my colleague, I am familiar with some of this, but I—if as a part of a question to me and not anything resembling a colloquy, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor if you have another question.

(Mr. MORENO assumed the Chair.)

To my colleague, are you familiar with an article “USDA halts millions of dollars worth of deliveries to food banks”?

Mr. BOOKER. I pretty sure I am. I am.

Mr. COONS. I will simply, then, ask my colleague a question.

Mr. BOOKER. Therefore, if you are going to ask me a question, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. To my colleague, I ask the question: Are you familiar with the cuts that have been imposed on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, suspending hundreds of millions of meals to Americans in need and the justification for that being offered?

Mr. BOOKER. I am familiar. I have mentioned it earlier in these last 15 hours, so thank you.

Mr. COONS. Last question.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. To my colleague from New Jersey, I ask the question: Are you familiar with when, whether, and why NATO has invoked article 4 and how the service and the sacrifice that followed reinforces exactly the point I believe my colleague was beginning to speak to, which is the common cause and the common purpose shown by all of our NATO allies in America’s greatest moment of need in recent decades after the attacks of 9/11?

Mr. BOOKER. I am very familiar with that. It haunts me that when America was in crisis—I live 11 miles from Ground Zero.

Mr. COONS. To my colleague, are you aware which of our European NATO allies lost per capita the highest number of their soldiers in combat serving alongside American servicemembers, a nation I visited, a nation whose servicemembers I visited, a nation that is today aggrieved by comments made recently? Are you familiar with our trusted ally Denmark?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I am. That country that has shed more blood than any of our allies, side-by-side, fighting with America is Canada—is Canada.

Mr. COONS. Denmark.

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, it is Denmark.

Mr. COONS. Denmark lost per capita, I believe—excuse me. Let me simply ask of my colleague one more question.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very much. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. Is my colleague aware that broadly distributed across our NATO allies is service and sacrifice, including the loss of their troops in combat and that every single loss in combat was a loss of great service and sacrifice by our NATO allies?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I am familiar. And I am grateful for your making those points.

As we threaten Greenland, Denmark tried to bully them in a way that—with rhetoric that fashions more after the behavior of Vladimir Putin’s threatening before the Ukrainian invasion, as opposed to what allies do who are grateful for shared sacrifice, who are grateful for shared honor, who are grateful for shared prosperity.

What is happening right now, to me, is shameful. How we are treating our allies is unacceptable. And the tariffs that will be imposed will indeed hurt Canada and other NATO allies, but they will hurt us in the long run more, not only with the immediacy of the driving up of prices for Americans, but what the President is doing as he turns his back on Republican traditions and Democratic traditions, it is going to hurt us more as a nation in the long run as other countries look to other places for leadership of the free world.

Mr. COONS. Will my colleague yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. Is my colleague familiar with the testimony of Gen. Jim Mattis, a decorated four-star Marine Corps general who served as Secretary of Defense in the previous Trump administration who testified about what the consequences would be if we were to defund development and diplomacy?

Mr. BOOKER. I hope that the colleague of mine who, again, has been a mentor, a friend on all they things foreign policy, my belief is that he is referring to when General Mattis sat before the United States Senate and said very pointedly: If you cut the foreign aid, if you cut organizations like USAID, if you cut programs in the State Department, then buy me more bullets.

Mr. COONS. Will my colleague yield for a final question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. Does my colleague have an opinion about whether it strengthens or harms America in our national security to have an earned reputation as a nation of compassion, a nation that comes to the aid of those suffering through humanitarian disasters, a nation of compassion that provides healthcare and access for retirement in decency, a nation that cares for the least of these on the margins of the world and that has a just and inclusive society at home? Does my colleague have an opinion about whether it strengthens or weakens our Nation at home and abroad to earn a reputation for compassion and reliability or instead to deserve a reputation for unreliability and cruelty?

Mr. BOOKER. So this is the powerful thing about my friend whom I went with on my first trip to the continent of Africa as a Senator, and I remember flying into Zimbabwe. The leader of that country had passed away, and you always correct me on my pronunciation so I am going to try my best pronunciation—Mnangagwa.

Mr. COONS. Mnangagwa.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you, sir.

The alligator was his reputation—had taken over as his leadership. And we, this bipartisan merry group of Senators were going there to sit there in a unified, bipartisan way and say to this new leader: You need to honor democratic principles. You need to honor free and fair elections, that we want to be your partner, we want to be your friend, but it is time for a new peaceful democratic Zimbabwe.

And as we landed—I don’t know if you remember—he was landing, too, in the airport. And he was coming from China. He was coming from China which has different values than we have.

In fact, you and I both see now all over the continent of Africa a competition. We come with USAID. We come with PEPFAR. We come with a program called AGOA, helping with economic development. We come with scientists that stand in the breach against the worst infectious diseases.

One of the most courageous things I saw CHRIS COONS do in my life was when the Ebola scare was happening 8 years ago and was starting to show up on our shores, you did something that people were afraid to do.

You went to Africa to visit with the people from our country that are there fighting Ebola. You had to come and quarantine when you came back to make sure you didn't have it. It was amazing because you were going there to say to the world, I, CHRIS COONS, Senator from Delaware, is here, but America is here. America knows that an infectious disease anywhere is a threat to public health everywhere. America knows that when it comes to the globe, Martin Luther King was right in his spiritual proclamation in the "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" that we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a common garment of destiny, that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

I have been to where you have been, Kenya to Tanzania, traveling with you to Ouagadougou. You used to make me smile when I used to say the capital of Burkina Faso. Ouagadougou, my friend.

There is a word I learned from a language, the Bantu language. It basically roughly translates into this:

I am because we are. I am because we are.

America has learned the power of soft power. General Mattis knew much cheaper investment, much more success, string of successes we have had in the last 25 years have been with our soft power, not with our 20-year wars in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

General Mattis knew that. He gave wisdom. He said: Do not cut the State Department. Do not cut USAID. They are making an invaluable contribution to fighting terrorism, to fighting instability, to spreading democracy, to fighting infectious diseases when we go and stand.

But now, we are shrinking. We are retreating. We are pulling back. We are cutting aid. And when crises are happening like we are seeing in Myanmar right now, we don't even have the personnel to be there to help people. But you know who does? China. And they show up, and they leverage influence—you and I know this—to the continent of Africa. Here, take our money, take our money. Be in debt to us now. We have control. By the way, we want a military port here like they have right next to us in Djibouti. The Chinese are playing the long game, and Trump is playing into their hands and weakening our Nation, not just against infectious diseases, not just against the global fight against climate change, not just against the economic opportunities that we are missing out in the Continent of Africa.

Guess what, if you don't know this: By 2050, one out of every four people on the planet Earth will live on the continent of Africa. One of three working-age people on the planet Earth will be

on the continent of Africa. China is playing the long game, not only critical rare earth minerals but the economic power of the most populous continent on the planet.

And what are we doing with Trump? We are doing the Michael Jackson. We are moonwalking away from that continent, saying: China, go ahead.

I love you CHRIS COONS. I am the ranking member of this subcommittee inspired by you, CHRIS COONS, and the work that you and me and LINDSAY GRAHAM and John McCain did over the last 10 years is being swept away as our allies are saying frightening things; that they have to look elsewhere for leadership and not to the people who saved the free world.

It is a shame what we are doing to my grandparents' generation, with my grandmother with her war bonds and her victory garden and my grandfather building bombers at the Willow Run bomber plant in Michigan. All the country came together and sacrificed for the war effort.

We saved Europe. We bled and died on that European Continent. There are—and you have seen them—these fields of crosses and you see some Stars of David and you see some Muslim graves. You see it all.

Our American boys died. And yet we still invested in that continent. We still invested with the Marshall Plan. We still invested with the Berlin Airlift. We still stood up to communism. And a great Republican President—a great Republican President—who stood up in front of a Russian autocratic leader and said: Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

And what is Trump going to be remembered for? I really love Vladimir Putin. Zelensky is a dictator. You are my friend.

You and I both visit VA halls, and occasionally, we meet a World War II veteran. In my State, there are some incredible men that still wear their hat. If they can, they stand with pride. They are called the "greatest generation."

And what are we doing to their legacy? What are we doing to their legacy, CHRIS COONS?

I am going to keep talking unless somebody wants to say: Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. MARKEY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. MARKEY. First of all, thank you so much for what you are doing, Senator BOOKER. You are drawing our Nation's attention to what Donald Trump and Elon Musk and DOGE are seeking to do to our country, especially the most vulnerable in our society.

You, Senator BOOKER, you have been a champion for the poor, for the sick, for the disabled, for those most in need throughout your entire life. That is who you are. You are absolutely a champion for those who need help the most.

So as we look at what Donald Trump is proposing, to destroy the Department of Education, just to level it, knowing that title I money goes to the poorest children in Newark, in Boston, so that they can have as close to an equal footing as is possible so they, too, can compete to ensure they enjoy the American dream.

To dock Medicaid, knowing that there are 338,000 people just in Massachusetts alone who are on disabilities, who need Medicaid in order to deal with those afflictions, which their families need a little bit of help to deal with, to begin a process of saying that Social Security is a Ponzi scheme and knowing that, ultimately, they need the billions of dollars for their tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, and they have to get it out of education. They have to get it out of Medicaid. They have to get it out of veterans' benefits. They have to get it out of Social Security.

We know what the plot is. The plot is to get \$2 trillion out of programs that affect ordinary people in order to have tax breaks for the wealthiest people in our Nation. And most of it will come out of healthcare. It will come out of Medicaid, ultimately, out of Medicare, out of the Affordable Care Act, out of veterans' benefits—healthcare, healthcare, healthcare, healthcare, healthcare, healthcare for every family, for the wealthiest in our society who don't need a tax break.

The one thing they don't need right now is a tax break, especially when Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg now control more wealth than the bottom 50 percent of our Nation combined. Do they really need a tax break? I mean, I know the President put them right behind him at his inauguration, but oh my God, the Cabinet sits behind billionaires? The Founding Fathers are spinning in their graves thinking about how they have perverted what is supposed to be the way in which our government, our country works.

So I thank you for your incredible leadership. You are putting the spotlight on what is going wrong in this country right now, this oligarchy seeking to take over our Nation.

So I thank the Senator for what he is doing, and he is just so consistent with his whole life, what he stands for. What he stands for on this on the floor of the Senate today is a conscience—a conscience for the Nation.

Can the Senator tell the Senate today—the Nation—what does it mean if we continue down this path of Donald Trump and Elon Musk and DOGE for those families who need help the most in our society?

Mr. BOOKER. I so appreciate the Senator, and I want to tell folks that when I wrote my book, I thought I knew this man here. I did a lot about environmental justice in my book. I did a lot about these toxic chemicals out there that are threatening our people.

I came to the office of the Senate one day so humbled because I told him: I

knew you as my colleague. We both got here around the same time. But I had no idea of the kinds of things you did in the U.S. House of Representatives, how many bills that made a difference in people's lives in Boston, in Newark, in Camden, in Passaic. You are one of the people that, after a few years here, I discovered in 2015, writing my book, how amazing your career is. And now having served in the Senate about the same amount of time, I am so grateful for you.

You have been so consistent in why you came here, not forgetting the people you have been fighting for for your whole career. So your question is right aligned with that point.

It was said earlier about things that humanity's biggest fight, humanity's biggest consistent theme is us versus them or just us. I don't like when you pit one group in this country against another group. It is not us versus the billionaires or us versus the Republicans; it is understanding what is best for "we the people." How can we create a more perfect Union?

I will tell you this right now, we are a Union in trouble. Compared to our global peers, we have higher disease rates, higher diabetes rates, higher cancer rates, higher maternal mortality rates, higher premature birth rates, and higher infant mortality rates.

There are so many things going on in this country that should not go on. But yet we are a nation of utter abundance. We are a nation of incredible wealth and resources, and we have proven in our past to be a nation of incredible vision. That is why I don't understand why we are playing so small, why we have a President that is playing so small. It is not coming here like Presidents of the past and saying "We together," from Reagan, to Clinton, to Obama. There is a big challenge, America, and we together are going to get into the room and do sausage making, Republicans and Democrats, and we are going to find a way to write great legislation.

Whatever you want to say about Joe Biden, he was a big President because he didn't try to do things by Executive fiat or this quote of Donald Trump's I put here, "the primacy of the Executive," ignoring our Constitution.

Do you know how many bipartisan bills were hammered out here? I see another dear friend of mine, MARK WARNER. Do you know how many bipartisan bills MARK WARNER was at the table for, my senior Senator who was chairman of Intelligence? We did a bipartisan infrastructure act when Trump, in his first term, had infrastructure week every other week. We did a Chips and Science bill. He is trying to claw back the money. But we, together—I still remember that classified SCIF where the whole Senate was there and our national security team, and Gina Raimondo put forward the crisis in our country, the vulnerabilities, and we came out of that room, we got into our

rooms, and we hammered out a great Chips and Science bill.

Decades went by in this body with doing nothing on gun violence—decades. Courageous people on the Republican side, friends of mine that surprised me that stood up—like Senator CORNYN—and said: We are going to do something. I have my lines, you have your lines, but let's find space in the middle.

We did programs. If you come to New Jersey, the community violence intervention money is lowering murder rates in places like Newark by over 50 percent and helping to get it done, along with our great law enforcement officers.

The incredible thing about that now is Trump is trying to claw back that money, violating the separation of powers because we decide how we are spending money in America, not the Executive. Read the Constitution.

So you and I both know that a big President would come here and say: Let's do some legislation.

But John McCain—and I read it in the middle of the night—but John McCain—it is really important—John McCain—I won't read it, but I will tell it—voted against the healthcare last time, the taking away of healthcare from millions of Americans, and said that it is because of the dysfunction of this body that we don't come together and do something bigger and bolder to provide better healthcare, to bring the ideas from both sides and expand the opportunities for Americans and replace the imperfections of the Affordable Care Act with smarter and better things.

Not Donald Trump. He is repeating—why?—the mistakes, but not with the ACA, which affects tens of millions of Americans, with Medicaid, which affects 70 to 100 million Americans. Why? You ask why. Well, we know why. There are two things that this will achieve—two things. One, as you said, it is because he wants to not just renew the Trump tax cuts but expand them to have disproportionate benefits to the wealthiest.

I wish the wealthiest in the country, names that we know, people like Elon Musk, would say: I don't want a tax cut. I wish he would say the truth: I don't need a tax cut.

But that is one of the reasons. He wants to renew a program that gave disproportionate money. But that is not the only reason. There is a cruelty in what he is doing. It is so offensive. He seems to have no respect for people with disabilities. He made fun of a journalist with a disability once. He seems to have no respect for people who are working hard and struggling but still can't make ends meet, no respect for people that are afraid of his language, of his threats. They think that what he is doing to Social Security might mean they don't have it.

What he is saying about Medicare and Medicaid are lies. He has more registered lies than any President of my

lifetime. They don't think they can trust this President not to hurt them because he already is.

I was told by my parents that what defines you as a person is not what happens to you but how you choose to respond.

What happens to us as a nation is not what defines us. They can bomb us at Pearl Harbor and attack us on 9/11. The American character was defined by how we responded to those crises. Yes, there have been major political crises before, but we responded by bending the arc of our Nation more towards justice, taking care of more and more people, saying that we belong to each other in America. It is "we the people." It is "we the people."

I see the standing of my friend MARK WARNER. I don't know if he has a question, but I know what I am told to say if he asks me to yield for a question.

Mr. WARNER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, if I may join my friend and colleague from Massachusetts, one, to celebrate the Senator from New Jersey's endurance, his willingness to continue to make his case in as clear terms as possible.

Not having been here last night at 6:30, I do wonder, when he started this speech-a-thon at 6:30, whether the bob and the weave and the move were quite as strong or was he firmly attached to the podium.

The fact that you are going on more than 12 hours now and you look like you have hours ahead and hours before you sleep and knowing that there are other Members who have a question, including the majority leader, I just want to be brief with mine.

You have talked a lot with great passion about the damage done domestically. As chairman of the Intelligence Committee and now vice chairman, I have been aghast at the sloppiness of this administration time after time after time in terms of their treatment of classified information.

In the first 2 weeks of the administration, strangely, a couple hundred CIA agents' identities were revealed on a nonclassified chain. These probationary employees, these new employees—the American Government had spent a couple hundred thousand dollars on each of them. You have to get a security clearance. You have to get them trained. Unfortunately, these folks can't deploy abroad. They can't deploy undercover because their names were carelessly put on an unsecured channel.

You say, well, that was just a one-off. Well, what about a week or so later? The DOGE boys print a whole list of Federal properties that should be for sale. They quickly take it down a few hours later, realizing they once again have screwed up. But in putting up that list, they put on classified dark sites that the American Government, again, spends millions of dollars to protect.

More recently as well, the DOGE boys, either ignorantly or maliciously, either one—just plain stupid—put out the list of a classified Agency, its budget, total head count—again, all classified information.

Senator, one thing I can tell you, and I know you know this as well, if this had happened to a line intelligence officer or a line military officer, there would be no question—your butt would be fired.

As a matter of fact, we got information yesterday that there had been a DHS employee who had inadvertently—adventurously—put a journalist on a chatline. Guess what happened. The guy was fired.

So when it came to this incident now called Signalgate or the Signalgate fiasco, where you have the leading members of this administration debating where and how we should bomb the Houthis, including specific information of who will be hit and when, I was—Senator BOOKER, I was down in Hampton Roads this week, and these were the communities that surround the Norfolk Naval Station. The Norfolk Naval Station is where the Truman, the aircraft carrier, has been deployed from. It is the aircraft carrier that the flights that attacked the Houthis flew off of.

I can tell you one thing, Senator BOOKER: These people were pissed off that there had been this level of carelessness about their loved ones, that if it had gotten in the wrong hands, it would have cost American lives.

So, Senator BOOKER, as you put down the litanies of all of the challenges that have been raised by this administration, I will ask you a simple question: Do you agree that this pattern—not a one-off—

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. WARNER.—this pattern of sloppiness endangers our national security?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Absolutely, yes.

I love that you gave that litany, Senator.

I benefited from your leadership on the Intel Committee. You are one of the people that—when things go down on planet Earth, you are one of the small handful of people with the highest security clearance here. You know before rank-and-file Senators do. We have had so many conversations about threat matrices and what our enemies are doing. You have sent me to the SCIF and said “I can’t talk to you about this; go down to the SCIF and ask for the information” and helped me to fill out my understanding of national security.

But I am stunned by this President. All that I have read in the SCIF about what Russia is doing to this country—I am stunned and angry at this President and what he is doing to us by cozying up to Putin and turning his back on our allies.

But the sloppiness, the unqualified leaders that he has put in place—it has caused us to be more at risk. And Signalgate—you said it. If that had

happened under any other President, Republican or Democrat, whoever controlled the Senate would have hearings. They would want to know: Was this pattern and practice? Did these Signal conversations happen before and we only know about this one because somehow you pulled in a journalist?

Well, that is a violation of the law because their disappearing messages were destroying government documents that the executive branch has a legal obligation to keep. And classified materials—putting it out there saying there was nothing classified about that, lying, then they put up the actual—if there is nothing classified, then release the whole thing.

To the wisdom of people like you—again, more wisdom and experience at intel than me—it is clear that was sensitive, probably classified. But we should be having hearings and accountability.

I keep going back to how this document is being undermined and attacked by this President. And one of the powers and responsibilities that we swore to uphold—every one of us swore to uphold that we are to be a check on the administration.

Before I yield to the next question from Senator SCHUMER, I want to talk about Senator SCHUMER. I want to say something and get it off my chest.

Senator MURPHY, we passed the 15-hour mark. I want to thank Senator MURPHY in particular because he has been with me the whole night. He hasn’t left my side. In some ways, that repaid the 15 hours because we called CHUCK SCHUMER 9 years ago—9 years ago. I remember exactly where we were standing when the three of us were on the phone. We asked CHUCK to help us, for you to take the floor right down there and do a filibuster. We didn’t know how long it was going to last. I committed to you I would be your aide-de-camp. And 15 hours you stood, CHRIS MURPHY, saying this Nation shouldn’t do business as usual for the Postmaster. The leader of the Senate, 9 years ago, said, “I support you guys. Go ahead.”

So one of the first people I called was Senator SCHUMER and talked to about this—actually, it was Murphy. He did full circle for me and has been with me the whole 15 hours. The debt is paid, but I have fuel in the tank, man. The only reason you stopped wasn’t because you couldn’t go on anymore. We got a concession from MITCH MCCONNELL. We got a concession to get two votes on commonsense gun safety that Republicans had put forward, like universal background checks in the past. But we lost that vote. On both occasions, 9 years apart, once when MURPHY was the principal and now here, we had a leader who said: Yes, how can I help?

I want to thank Senator SCHUMER before, I suspect, he might ask and yield for a question, for being a friend, a partner, and one of the first people I turned to with this idea and encouraged me to go for it. “Go for it, CORY.”

Thank you, CHUCK SCHUMER.

Mr. SCHUMER. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. I have two questions, frankly, one on Medicaid cuts, which we talked about last night, and one on tariffs.

First, let me say before I get to this question that your strength, your fortitude, your clarity has just been nothing short of amazing. And all of America is paying attention to what you are saying. All of America needs to know there are so many problems because of the disastrous actions of this administration in terms of how they are helping only the billionaires and hurting average families.

You have brought that forth with such clarity. People from one end of America to the other admire you. Our whole caucus is behind you. And we admire your stamina, your strength, your passion, your intelligence. The list of adjectives could go on.

My first question relates to the Medicaid cuts. As we talked about last night, I visited three Republican districts—one in Staten Island, one right on the border of two Republican districts in Long Island—yesterday to talk about Medicaid cuts. I went to nursing homes. It was clear that the Medicaid cuts that are proposed in this proposal—\$380 billion in the House—would be devastating.

On Staten Island, the nursing home we visited—they love it, Silver Lake nursing home—would close. Three hundred people would lose their jobs; hundreds would be thrown out. And most of them said their children can’t take care of them. It is too—their needs are more advanced. Even some who said their children might be able to take care of them didn’t have room in the house, et cetera. So it is affecting Staten Island, middle class, voted for Trump.

But we made a plea to their congresswoman to not vote for any bill that had these Medicaid cuts in the tax breaks for billionaires. A lot of the people there were—it was bipartisan, both parties there. We estimated that about 18,000 people total would lose their jobs with these Medicaid cuts, creating a recession on Staten Island. We estimated the harm that it would cause. So this was devastating.

Same thing on Long Island. Again, Republican areas with Republican Congress people who hold the balance. If those three Congress people alone would say: I am not voting for a bill that cuts Medicaid to give tax breaks for the billionaires, the bill would fail.

I know that you in New Jersey and my colleagues in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and elsewhere are doing the same thing, Congressmen and Senators. I talked to Leader JEFFRIES. He is doing the same with his folks.

So my question to you is very simple. If these people in New Jersey, in New York, across America are kicked out of

nursing homes and assisted living facilities and healthcare facilities, what would they do? How could they—and how does the Senator, with his passion and everything else, feel when the only reason they are doing this is to give tax breaks to the wealthiest of Americans?

Would you please answer my question, sir?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I will, Leader SCHUMER. Earlier, or late last night, rather, I read dozens and dozens and dozens of letters from terrified people. The stories were heartbreaking as people rendered their pride and gave us insights into the more painful aspects of their lives.

I got emotional over one about a person talking about being diagnosed with Parkinson's and knowing the disease would be more and more debilitating, like I saw with my father, and demand more and more help. And she was paranoid that the burden on her family, they couldn't afford it.

I had these amazing—this one amazing letter about a person who said they were in a sandwich generation—two 90-something-year-old parents they were taking care of and two adult men—children—with disabilities. For all these people, like you saw in the nursing homes, Medicaid wasn't a plus or some kind of abundance heaped upon their lives. It helps them keep the fragile financial world they were living in stable. And it is not just the \$880 billion cuts, Senator SCHUMER. Half of that or a quarter of that would cut services that would pull apart their whole lives—their ability to care for their loved ones, their ability to still work.

One person just said the transportation we get through Medicaid for my disabled child is the link that holds it all together. And callously and cruelly, they are talking about this, not in any kind of insightful way, not in any kind of "here is how we can make it more efficient and help keep it." There is none of that thought or logic, bringing in experts because we read page after page after page from rural hospital leaders, of urban hospital leaders and more and more.

Your question is clearly that it is this crazy scheme right now to expand the Trump tax cuts that overwhelmingly disproportionately go to the wealthiest of us in America who need not our help; that would still yet expand the deficit by trillions of dollars, which means your children—and I know how proud a grandfather you are—your grandchildren would have to pay for that debt. They are stealing from your grandchildren so that the wealthiest amongst us could get bigger tax cuts and, at the same time, taking away medical coverage from the most vulnerable.

What is that? It is not who we are. It is not who we are, America.

And as much as people—thousands depended on us to save the ACA—Medicaid affects millions and millions of

more people. Wake up. They are coming after a vital program for American expectant mothers, for American children, for American disabled, for seniors like the ones you visited.

I have one more thing to get off my chest, sir. This is a little lighter. You heaped so many kind things on me, I don't know if you realize that never before in the history of America has a man from Brooklyn said so many complimentary things about a man from Newark.

Mr. SCHUMER. I would remind my colleague that we are both New York Giants fans.

Mr. BOOKER. Who play where? In New Jersey. This is not a colloquy. I hold the floor. I do not yield. Brooklyn stole the Nets—it is an injustice—from Newark. They stole the Nets. I do not yield the floor for a rebuttal. And the Giants and the Jets play in New Jersey. There is only one football team in New York, and that is the Bills.

I do not yield, but I do love and respect you. When I have the floor, I don't have to yield. The one time in my life I get the last word with my much more senior, much wiser friend and Senator.

Mr. SCHUMER. My colleague, I do have another question on an unrelated subject.

Mr. BOOKER. OK, unrelated. As long as you give me that commitment, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. First, let me say before I ask my question, Go Bills. Second, given the 15 hours which you have shown such amazing strength of an all-American athlete who could probably, given what you have shown tonight, be a star on our Giants—so I will not even try to rebut where the Giants are.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you.

Mr. SCHUMER. I will ask this question. Going back—before I get to tariffs—one of the leading hospitals in New York told me if there were only a 20-percent cut of Medicaid, less steep than they show, that they would close. They are the only cancer care place in the Bronx, 1.3 million people, and they give great care. They are the only ones. They would close.

So the devastation of these cuts, the American people should realize, is just enormous from one end of the country to the other—middle-class communities and upper middle-class communities like Long Island, middle-class like Staten Island, and poor communities like the Bronx.

On tariffs, let me ask a question. So here we are, right on the edge of April 2. Today is April Fool's Day, but the tariffs the President is proposing, unfortunately, are not part of an April Fool's trick. They are real, and they are devastating. My question to my colleague is: With these tariffs, which is estimated would cost the American families \$6,000 more on average, would raise costs on everything across the board, and would throw devastation into our economy—look at the stock

market. It goes down when Trump is serious about tariffs, then goes up when he says maybe he is not so serious. And with the chaos that it has caused so businesses which love certainty—small businesses, medium-sized businesses, large businesses need certainty.

So my questions are these. Does the great Senator and great Giants' fan from Newark agree that prices could go way up, all the way up to as much as \$6,000? And does he agree that the chaos from Trump's tariffs is discombobulating the economy in very serious ways? And, again, does he agree that the reason they seem to be doing this, they count the revenues. This guy Navarro seems to have no sense of reality, yet he seems to be in charge. And they count the revenues to help them get more tax cuts for the wealthy.

Almost everything they do, including tariffs, it seems to me, is aimed at getting those tax cuts for the wealthy. God bless the wealthy, as I heard you say last night when we spoke. We are not against people who make a lot of money. God bless them, but they don't need a tax break.

Mr. BOOKER. No, they don't.

Mr. SCHUMER. They should realize the beauty of America helped them become or stay billionaires. The money we invested in education and roads and schools and helping kids get food makes a better workforce.

So my question to my colleague on these tariffs, A, does he agree that it could raise the price on an average family thousands of dollars—it is estimated \$6,000. Does he agree that the chaos caused by Trump's on-again, off-again, this-country, that-country, this-much, that-much, this-product, that-product is hurting the economy and hurting business people doing their jobs? And does he agree that it seems the motivation is tax breaks for the wealthiest people?

Will you please answer my question?

I yield back to the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. I will.

So you and I both know that in 72 days now—it is the next day—that of the 72 days that Trump has been in office, he has caused havoc on the American economy, especially given the economy he inherited. Inflation is up. Prices are up. Consumer confidence is down. The stock market and people's 401(k)s—their retirement plans—are down. He continues to do things to rattle confidence, to raise prices, and to hurt not the billionaires—the people who can afford these things—but to hurt average Americans, who find housing prices too high and difficult to make ends meet.

Every time—and I have looked at the tariffs throughout history. In fact, one of my friends sent me this really funny clip I hope somebody will put up for me from, I think it was "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" where he was talking about tariffs and was like "Bueller! Bueller!"—or maybe it was another

movie. I am mixing it up. It shows my—

Mr. SCHUMER. You are entitled.

Mr. BOOKER. What is that?

Mr. SCHUMER. You are entitled.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you.

But the tariffs haven't worked out for Republican Presidents who tried them during the Depression. The evidence is here. Learn from our history.

Mr. SCHUMER. Sorry. Does my colleague remember the names of Smoot and Hawley?

Mr. BOOKER. Smoot and Hawley. Yes, sir, I definitely remember those names from high school history.

God bless you, Mr. Al Gore and Mr. Perot.

So, yes, what he is going to do tomorrow is going to rattle the markets. What he is going to do tomorrow is raise prices for Americans. What he is going to do tomorrow is lie to folks and say this is something that China will pay or whoever will pay when actually it is the American consumers who will pay with higher prices and more economic insecurity.

This man—I will tell you this quote that Frederick Douglass once said. This I do remember.

He said:

The limits of tyranny are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

How much more will we take of this? How much more will we as America say "Cut our Medicaid to give tax cuts to the billionaires. Take the Affordable Care Act, and take away tax credits. Take away enrollment support. Hey, come after Social Security. Cut thousands of people. Make customer service get worse," as said the Wall Street Journal? How much more of these indignities will we take as he turns our back on our allies? How much more will we take—how much more?—of a person who is doing tyrannical things as he takes our Constitution and continues to trash it as he is running into judge after judge after judge who is trying to stop him? But we have already seen that he wants to ignore judges or if he gets rulings he doesn't like, he trashes the judges, and even the Chief Justice, appointed by a Republican, says: No, no.

This is not right. This is not who we are. This is not how we do things in America.

How much more can we endure before we in the collective chorus of conviction in our country say: Enough is enough. Enough is enough. You are not going to get away with this.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank the Senator for his fortitude, his strength, and the crystalline brilliance by which he has shown the American people the huge dangers that face them with this Trump-DOGE-Musk administration.

I yield the floor back to my colleague from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts, but I think you have to ask him to yield for a question.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. WARREN. I am very grateful to the Senator from New Jersey for coming to the floor for such an extended period of time to give voice to all of those around this country whose voices evidently are not heard by the Republicans in the U.S. Congress.

I wanted to ask a question for the 73 million people who are beneficiaries of the Social Security System and for their families—for the people whose grandmas are getting Social Security, for the people whose cousins or whose dads died who were getting Social Security benefits, about what is happening right now between Donald Trump and Elon Musk, our current co-Presidents, and what they are trying to do to the Social Security System.

So I start this question with just a basic observation. Social Security is not charity. It is not something we give away to those who are less fortunate and we do this out of the goodness of our hearts. Social Security is a contract that people who work in America pay into; it is the system for all of their working lives. When the time comes that they retire or something happens to them and they are not able to do that work, they can count on the Social Security System and the payments they are legally entitled to. I want to underscore here "legally."

Now, if America wanted to change that contract, the place they have to go is right here, to Congress.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. WARREN. They have to come to the U.S. Senate or they have to go to the U.S. House of Representatives, and they have to say: We actually want to change benefits for Social Security recipients.

By the way, that has happened dozens and dozens of times in our history, up through the late 1980s, when we made adjustments in the Social Security benefits—for example, for the fact that people lived longer, for the fact that people worked longer, and so we made minor adjustments in the system. We also made adjustments to make sure that there were cost-of-living changes in how much Social Security would pay out.

So anyone who wants to change the benefits that people are legally entitled to has to come here to Congress and make that happen.

But it appears that Elon Musk and Donald Trump have tried to figure out an end run, and the end run is to say: OK. We can't directly change benefits, but what we can do is we can effectively cut off benefits.

Now, how can they do that? Well, one way is to fire all the people who help people get their Social Security benefits. Think of it this way: There is someone who wants to collect Social Security. Let's just say, at age 66, they decide, "I am ready. It is time for me to retire. I can't do this anymore. I

want to collect my Social Security benefits," and they try to fill out the form. It turns out it gets rejected. There is a number off somewhere in the system. Somebody has gotten confusion on what the name is or where somebody worked or an employer from decades back failed to fill out the right form, so now there is a problem in the system.

So what does a person do? Well, first, they might try calling, but if you fired the people who answer the phones, that is not going to work. OK. So what is the next thing you do? You go to your local Social Security office. Oh, but if they close the Social Security office near you, that is not going to work. So what do you do? You go to the Social Security office that you can find that is 2 hours away, 3 hours away, 4 hours away. You finally get through to that Social Security office, and when you get there, if they have fired most of the people, you may encounter what? Two people working the desk to help straighten out problems and a line that is 50 people long.

By the way, these come from real stories. People are telling us what is happening out there.

So by the time the day is over, our example here hasn't even made it to the front of the line. So he doesn't get the question answered. He doesn't get the problem resolved. He has to go back home again and has to find somebody who can maybe take him to the Social Security office that is hours away and start this process over and over and over.

If this person—let's just say for example it takes 3 months to get this problem ultimately resolved by the Social Security Administration. They don't get the money. That money is lost. It just simply is gone. They do not get the money they are legally entitled to, and they have no right to go back and collect it, even pointing out that it was Social Security's error.

So the failure to correct these errors or to give people an opportunity to correct these errors is effectively the same as having cut their benefits. When you do that for 1 percent of the people, you drive up your error rate. When you do that for 5 percent of the people or when you do that for 10 percent of the folks who are getting Social Security—and, man, those cuts really start to add up—they really start to add up for the people whose benefits are cut. They really start to add up for Donald Trump and for Elon Musk.

Let's look at another possibility here, and that is just simply delay. Checks don't go out on time. When checks don't go out on time, then the promise that people relied on that that check would come on the 3rd of the month is what they count on for rent. That is what they count on to put groceries on the table. That is what they count on to support themselves. It is gone.

So maybe he will get the check next month. Another billionaire Republican,

Howard Lutnick, said: Don't worry about it. His mother-in-law would simply count on the fact that they would straighten the problem out, and maybe next month, she would get her payment. I suppose if your son-in-law is a billionaire, you can count on the fact that somebody will make sure your rent gets covered and groceries are on the table, but for the 70 million Americans who rely on that check coming in every month, it is not so clear what you are going to do.

So what do you do? Do you borrow money to make rent? Do you call on relatives if you have them? Whom do you go to to be able to make it to the end of this month and, if the problem persists, to the next month and the next month? Where do you go?

That is, in my view, as much a benefit cut as Congress's having voted to say: We are just going to give a 10-percent across-the-board cut to everyone who receives Social Security benefits.

There are a lot of ways to cut benefits, and breaking your promise to 73 million Americans is a benefit cut. It is not a legal benefit cut, but it is an effective benefit cut.

I admire the Senator from New Jersey for being here today to speak out for those Americans who face these kinds of cuts and have no recourse. I admire him for standing up and saying to the Republicans who won't go do townhalls and who won't go out and meet with these people and listen to them: Listen to their concerns. Listen to their fears. Listen to their stories about what happens as thousands and thousands more Social Security employees are fired. Correcting problems and straightening out your benefits gets harder and more out of reach for more and more Americans. That is what we face right now.

So the question that I want to pose to the Senator from New Jersey is this: At a time when Donald Trump and Elon Musk are looking for an indirect way to cut Social Security benefits—and let's just pause here, if I can, to say, Why?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. WARREN. Why go out of your way to cut Social Security benefits?

Come on now. There are 73 million Americans who rely on this. This has been the backbone of America's promise to its own people that you did the work, you put in the money, and now you are entitled to the benefit on the other side.

Why are they doing this? Because they want to reduce the amount of money that is available for Social Security and instead take that money over so that they can advance tax cuts for billionaires and billionaire corporations. They are just trying to grease the skids here for the billionaires to get even richer and ask the 73 million Americans who rely on Social Security to pay for it out of their own hides.

So the question I have for the Senator from New Jersey is, When Elon Musk and Donald Trump are deter-

mined to try to use a backdoor way to cut Social Security benefits, A, are they acting legally, and B, how do we put a stop to this?

(Mr. SHEEHY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. BOOKER. Amen. Amen.

You know, Reverend WARNOCK was here earlier and was preaching and quoting Scripture, but you are preaching the gospel of truth, my friend, from a civic gospel that speaks to the cares and the concerns of American hope and of the American dream and of the American Constitution, because you and I both know the answer to the question.

I have to say, for the folks who are watching, she is the great Senator from Massachusetts, but she used to be a professor in New Jersey.

Ms. WARREN. That is true.

Mr. BOOKER. She was a Rutgers professor. I was listening to her way before I got to the Senate when she was fighting for the CFPB, when she was fighting so people would not be taken advantage of. She established the first-ever Agency whose sole purpose was to stand up to the Big Bs—to big banks, to big corporate powers—and defend people. It is an institution that got billions and billions of dollars back into the pockets of the American consumers.

What did Donald Trump and DOGE do to an institution that we set up in Congress in a bipartisan way? They did something that is against the Constitution. They went after it to hack it to pieces so that it is no more.

But to add insult to injury, down here, we just had a vote on overdraft fees that was stunning to me because there is just no defense of it. It was a clear thing.

Some of the big banks said: Do you know what? We don't need those usury fees. It is actually wrong. Those are the big banks that stood up and did the right thing. But a handful of others were still taking advantage of people, and this Senate got to vote on which side are we on. And we failed.

So your question is right. You detail what is right about how people are getting hurt already, how the benefits of Social Security are already being affected, how rural Social Security offices are being closed already. And the question is why, under the guise of efficiency, but you are hurting our elders who deserve dignity in their retirement.

It is stunning to me, Senator WARREN—stunning to me—that we are actually even having this discussion and having this debate when there has been not one congressional hearing about what Elon Musk is doing.

The letters I read earlier about Social Security were painful because people wanted to know what was being done with their most confidential and private information.

I want to continue because we were working through national security. And given the time, I want to rush to just read some stories of voices. I want-

ed to come to the floor and read people's voices, elevate voices.

So here is a voice, a statement from Julia Hurlley from Bergen County, NJ.

Thank you, Julia. I see you.

My family's roots are deep in New Jersey, all the way back to my great-grandparents, with my mom's side from Bogota, Fair Lawn, and Upper Saddle River and my dad's side from Spring Lake and Wall Township. I have north and south roots.

My grandfather started a manufacturing company that my cousin still runs, and my other grandfather ran a trucking company based in New Jersey. I was born and raised in Park Ridge and learned from a very young age about the importance of serving and community.

Both of my grandfathers served in World War II.

What a family.

My family was always involved in charity and our churches. And ever since I can remember, I wanted to help people, doing my first fundraiser for homeless people in Bergen County, when I was maybe 8 or 9.

The passion for service took an international bend after I went abroad for the first time during an exchange trip to Germany with Park Ridge Junior-Senior High School in 2001 and fell in love with travel.

Shortly after that, September 11 happened. Seven people from my little town were killed in the towers, and we could see the smoke from Ground Zero from a hill the next town over.

For those of you who don't know, Park Ridge is very close to where I grew up, and my childhood best friend died in the Towers.

This was when I learned how my little suburban bubble could be impacted by things worlds away. I became obsessed with trying to help and wanting to drive a career that would be in service to my country and people elsewhere so that those people would be more inclined to work with us than against us.

I went on to study diplomacy and international relations at Seton Hall University, graduating magna cum laude and determined to work for the State Department at some point.

My 15-year winding career path after that took me into the advocacy space and onto humanitarian and peace-building work in Gaza with the U.N., as well as in Tunisia and Egypt.

In 2022, after years as a policy advisor with the International Committee of the Red Cross, I was recruited to join USAID. And I couldn't have been more excited. This was a dream job, an opportunity to serve my country and impact policy in a real way, sharing what I had learned from working abroad and at home to shape U.S. foreign policy and efforts to advance development and humanitarian assistance on the ground.

I was eventually promoted to a senior policy advisor role in USAID's Office of Policy, where I was developing policy that was shaping the way USAID worked, trying to break down silos across the Agency, to be more effective and efficient in our response to some of the toughest crises in the world.

I got the opportunity to not only prepare talking points for high-level events and for our leadership but even brief the administrator a couple of times.

That all came crashing down around January 28, as my colleagues began being terminated and furloughed.

I went into the Trump administration like any other bureaucrat, ready to engage and help because I want every administration—I

want every administration—to succeed and lean on us as experts to help advance American policy. I worked with our team, and I briefed our political appointee director, who started on Inauguration Day, and hoped to see what I could do to continue building on the reform work I had been doing for a year at that point.

Instead, everything quickly unraveled. Elon Musk called USAID a criminal organization that should die, he said. And the President of the United States deemed us radical left lunatics. I was terrified, afraid of what people might do when two of the most powerful men in the world were saying things like that.

Our jobs were then in question, and the USAID offices were quickly closed, with our belongings still in them. We were left not knowing what our fate would be for weeks.

As DOJ dismantled USAID, I watched in horror as the program shut down. The people we served suffered, and friends and colleagues from the Agency, and our partner organizations lost their livelihoods and their mission-driven careers.

On March 14, I was finally terminated. I have been heartbroken since, shifting between deep depression and rage.

Because of the sledgehammer approach that DOGE took, the entire foreign assistance architecture was broken. Organizations I would have gone on to work for are going bankrupt, cutting staff, and definitely not hiring.

I spent 15 years building up this career that I loved beyond words. Every time I would leave my late father while he was dying in a hospital in 2012, he would tell me to go save the world. This wasn't just a career; it was a calling to serve.

I have no idea what I will do next. In some ways, I feel lucky, because I got married last May—

God bless you—

and I am on my husband's health insurance.

Thank God.

But he also works for the government, and he could be RIFed within a moment's notice. I also have supportive family who will help me if it really gets bad.

But the uncertainty has probably been one of the most painful parts of all of this, not knowing what will come next and just fearing it will be worse than the day before. All we wanted to do was serve.

I want to say thank you to Julia Hurley from Bergen County—my home county—New Jersey. Thank you for your voice. Thank you for making your pain plain and your anger, making it real in my heart, as I know it is in yours. I stand for you today.

A personal statement from Catherine Baker from Neptune, NJ:

I have been furloughed from my job at my USAID implementing partner since February 14, 2025. I have 13 years' experience supporting USAID contractors and business development and recruitment efforts, mostly in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The following is how I got here today: I was born in Neptune and raised there until I went to college. My father is a lifelong Neptune resident whose Jersey roots date all the way back to early 1700s—

Wow—

when my Scottish ancestors came here in search of religious freedom and economic opportunity to help build much of what is Gloucester and Mercer Counties.

My mother is an immigrant born in Coro, Venezuela, to refugees escaping fascism bombs and economic ruin in Spain and Sic-

ily. Every summer, my mom and I traveled to Venezuela to see her mother, my aunts, and uncles, and countless cousins. Coro, the capital of Venezuela State, responsible for most of oil refining, sits on the Caribbean coast and is about a 15-minute plane ride from Aruba, surrounded by sand dunes.

Our family friends lived in homes with dirt floors, corrugated aluminum roofs, and a hose out back you would use to shower while feeding off the chickens that roamed freely.

Coro is a city in constant drought. We would get water every other day, and you would use a trash bin filled with water and a ladle to shower on your nonwater days. Coro, as you could imagine, couldn't be more different from Neptune, NJ.

I went to St. James Elementary and Red Bank Catholic High School in Red Bank from kindergarten through 12th grade. If 13 years of Catholic school teaches you anything, it is the importance of taking care of one another, especially those that are suffering from poverty, famine, and disease.

I remember being given small cartons where we were tasked with filling with spare change so we could ship them off to some faraway place, where we were told stories of children just like us who were facing unimaginable hardships. I was so moved by the notion that a child, not so different from myself, didn't have enough to eat or had lost their parents in a conflict, I couldn't begin to understand.

My senior year at RBC, I took a class called Globalization and Social Justice. The class was taught by a longtime family friend, Marianne Logan, herself a former nun. Ms. Logan taught us about the Rwandan genocide and had us watch "Hotel Rwanda" as a class. She made sure we knew the reasons why this happened, understood how dehumanization and hatred can lead to mass torture and executions and critique the international response to the genocide that led to nearly 1 million deaths in 100 days.

That year, Ms. Logan took us to King University to see Nick Kristof speak about Darfur and made sure we knew the signs of genocide when we saw it. How can we let this happen again, we asked her. I wore my "Save Darfur" green rubber bracelet and T-shirt everywhere I went.

What could I, a kid living at the Jersey Shore, do to help? During this period of enlightenment, led by Ms. Logan, the Maryknoll missionaries-funded school in Kibera, Kenya, that we were supporting was threatened by electoral violence in December of 2007. We received letters from the nuns there, who were Ms. Logan's personal friends, about how the fires nearly reached the school and the children, who were already living in Africa's largest slums, stood poised to lose the little they had, including their lives.

Upon returning from Christmas break, Maryknoll Affiliate's club sprang into action. We raised awareness and funds and proudly sent money from bake sales and doorknocking to our friends in Kenya. We received media attention from WCBS in New York, and our story got picked up by other channels and newspapers.

I was amazed that my efforts in Monmouth County were having such meaningful and real impact on a crisis happening thousands of miles away. I was passionate about this work. I was seemingly good at it, or as good as an 18-year-old could be. Could I actually turn this into a career? Could I help even more people across the world?

I'd like to think I did that. I'd like to think I did that. And I am crying as I write this because I wonder if I ever will do it again.

The past 10 years, I focused on conflict prevention, stabilization, preventing countering

violent extremism, and citizen insecurity, conflict, or post-conflict areas. Not only did I conduct desk research and analyzed problem sets from behind a desk, but I got to travel to those countries and meet with local governments, civil society organizations, and advocacy groups to hear from them about the issues and discuss solutions.

I spoke to survivors of the devastating 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and Tamil. Fathers and brothers disappeared during the civil war and are likely burned in unmarked graves somewhere on the island.

I worked closely with a woman my age whose families fled Kosovo to the United States during the war when we were about 9 years old and returned as soon as she could to her home country to promote continued peace between Albanians and Serbs.

My recent trips to Kosovo were so illuminating not because of the pain or struggle of these people but because of the respect and admiration and gratitude they had toward the United States of America.

Anyone who has been to Pristina knows of the Bill Clinton and Bob Dole statues—

I didn't know about that—

as well as the Hillary Boutique.

A few years ago when I was negotiating an employment offer with a Ghanaian candidate for a USAID-funded preventing violent extremism program, I couldn't meet his salary expectations. He said to me, "That is OK. I will take whatever you can give me. If the United States will make sacrifices for the people of Ghana in support of this program, I am willing to make a sacrifice too with a pay cut."

He proudly accepted the offer. The recognition that these funds could be spent elsewhere was not lost on him.

Generosity and kindness are always more greatly appreciated by those who have less. All but one of my company's USAID contracts, which totaled nearly \$400 million, were terminated almost overnight by DOGE. Over 80 percent of our Virginia-based office was laid off or furloughed.

I bought my first condo last year—a milestone we all strive for but too few people my age are able to achieve. I applied to 60 jobs in 1 month, all of which I am qualified for, before I received two interview requests—this after being a sought-after professional in my industry with a strong network cultivated through years of hard work. This has ruined me.

My mortgage payment isn't what makes me cry, though; it is our local staff and partners that come to mind every night as I say my prayers. My colleague, a Sudanese refugee living in Kampala, working on a terminated USAID peace-building program from Sudan, texts me every week to ask how I am doing. He called me to make me smile because he knew I was crying. He now calls me "sad eyes" and has made it his mission to never see tears fall from these lashes again. I obviously lie to him and say "mission accomplished," but it will never be true.

Not only is the United States not stronger, not safer, not more prosperous, but the beacon of our democracy grows dim across the globe. Without leadership, other countries hostile to the United States will step in, and innocent people will continue dying.

When I close my eyes, the specter of very real people from my travels and projects appear, and I hear the echoes of suffering they shared with me, suffering they were sure to know was alleviated, however temporarily, by the United States of America through USAID.

And wherever they could, they would thank me. Whenever they could, they would thank me and America. They would thank me and America for it.

Thank you, Catherine Baker from Neptune, NJ. And Catherine, I see you.

I see you, Catherine. I hear you. I stand for you. But I want to share something with you.

One of the most extraordinary trips I have had as a U.S. Senator was to Chad, to go up to the border of Chad and Sudan and see the horrors—I have been to refugee camps all around the globe, but to see the horrors of what was happening again in Sudan.

You wore that “Save Darfur” T-shirt in your earlier days, but the ethnic cleansing is going on right now. I have never seen so many malnourished babies, barely able to hold up their heads, people fleeing tyranny. And they fled across the border to meet Americans because we were there. With less than 1 percent of the American budget, we were there, standing for our values, our highest ideals, our faith traditions—the understanding that when we are out there making the world safer, responding to crises, not only were people seeing the help they need, but they saw the light and the beacon of this democracy.

And it pains me that CHRIS COONS comes down here and shares the headlines from today’s newspaper that in Myanmar, in this horrific earthquake, the Agency that used to respond to that tragedy, that human tragedy, doesn’t have the resources. America is not there. It is a void.

And then CHRIS COONS says, in the article I am surely to read today or tomorrow, whenever I can’t stand anymore—he says: Who fills that vacuum? Who showed up but the PRC. China showed up.

Less than 1 percent of our budget. Less than 1 percent of our budget, and people like the folks I read from—whose whole life all they wanted to do was to be the light of the American torch of freedom and hope to the world—had the rug pulled out from under them.

But here is what is worse, because we have had, CHRIS MURPHY, meetings with some of the people behind the scenes that they are savagely cutting, and the stories are horrible: people in dangerous places that we sent there having their emails cut, having their phones turned off; pregnant women who don’t know how they are going to get out of those areas.

And James Mattis, as we discussed, said: If you cut these kind of programs, buy me more bullets because there will be more instability; there will be more political democracies being overthrown; there will be more terrorism; there will be more violence.

And we are old enough as a nation at 250 years to know that if we don’t meet these terrorists abroad, they will visit us at home. As CHUCK SCHUMER said, I was there watching the towers come down. And in the Sahel before, in Africa, that is the threat—in Togo, in Ghana, in Benin. In northern parts of the country, they are fighting terrorism.

Mr. MURPHY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, God, yes, I will. I yield for a question while retaining the floor, CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY. We have a few more colleagues who are going to join us before the top of the hour, but I just wanted you to round this out and ask you the question this way.

Often, when we talk about the withdrawal of USAID from the world, the withdrawal of the United States from international bodies like the WHO, the beneficiary is China. But I think you were hinting, as you talked about the African continent, that the threat is much broader than that because USAID is not just doing counter-China programming; it is also doing counter-extremism programming. In Lebanon, for instance, it is doing the primary work to push back against Hezbollah’s political influence there. It is doing work to counter Russian influence around its periphery.

And so isn’t it the case, Senator BOOKER, that as USAID is pulled off the playing field, for reasons we still don’t understand, that it is all of our adversaries—state adversaries and nonstate adversaries—who are, tragically, celebrating at this opening that we have given them to gain additional influence?

Mr. BOOKER. Senator MURPHY, that is correct. You have been one of the most articulate voices for this decision—I shouldn’t even call it a decision—this reckless trashing of USAID, this vilification of the proud men and women that stand in Ebola outbreaks, that stand in terrorism, that stand against hardships and ethnic cleansing, that stand against malnutrition.

You are so good at pointing out that those are American interests and that not to do that makes this a more dangerous and unsafe world, a world where countries like ours want to lob missiles into Yemen, post-facto of crises.

So I hear you, CHRIS MURPHY, and I answer your question with a simple understanding that what you are saying is right. And I am going to tell you that I have got so many others to read, but we are way behind schedule of where we wanted to be at this point. We are way behind at about 16 hours and 24 minutes.

And so, to obey my staff, as Senators are told to do, I want to move quickly to just the housing issues. So I want to move quickly to housing and start, really, with the theme of affordable housing.

Again, we keep returning to the economy and how the Trump administration is making things worse in every area, especially for people struggling. And so let me be clear that, for decades, under Democrat and Republican Presidents, it has become increasingly difficult for working-class Americans to afford a home.

In recent years, this nationwide housing affordability crisis for so many Americans has nearly reached a breaking point. The crisis now impacts nearly all Americans, shared across all de-

mographics. Regardless of partisan identification, race, age, gender, education, or whether you own or rent your home, we in America are in a housing crisis.

According to the Center for American Progress, 80 percent of Americans living in rural communities believe housing affordability is getting worse, while 72 percent of residents in urban areas feel the same way. In October 2024, the Center for American Progress found, no matter your ZIP Code, the goal of homeownership in America is drifting further out of reach all across the country.

Over the past two decades, housing costs have dramatically outpaced income growth in the United States, increasing the rent burden, heightening barriers for homeownership. The Housing Price Index, a gauge of how selling prices for single-family homes have changed over time, was more than 50 percent higher in July 2024 than it was in July 2019.

According to the Brookings Institution, the U.S. housing market was short 4.9 million housing units in 2023 relative to the mid-2000s. Decades of policy at the Federal, State, and local levels have all contributed to this reality. Let’s not blame some rank partisanship; it has been decades in the making.

There are far too few homes in the United States, and there are far too few homes being built in the United States. The cost of housing keeps rising. Rents continue to skyrocket. Median home prices are on the rise, which makes it harder and harder for families to make ends meet.

The vast majority of young Americans are hard-pressed to save for the chance of one day having enough for a downpayment to buy a home. Almost half of all renters in America struggle to pay their rent. Almost half of all renters are struggling to pay the rent, devoting more than one-third of their income to housing costs.

Since the pandemic, rents have jumped more than 12 percent year over year. Hidden rental fees and other expenses on already cost-burdened tenants continue to mount as landlords assume more and more power and leverage, leaving tenants and prospective home buyers with nowhere to turn.

Last year, NPR methodically walked through the supply shortage that is impacting our country.

But before I read this article, I see that my colleague, my friend, the extraordinary leader from Maryland, is here, and I think he has a question for me first.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I want to thank my friend, and I want to start by thanking the Senator from New Jersey, the senior Senator from New Jersey, for shining a spotlight on what is happening in our country at this moment

and specifically what is going to be happening here in the U.S. Senate later this week or next.

And I have a question for the Senator, but I want to take some of the threads of what you have been saying as I put this to you because you are shining a light on the great betrayal. And that is, Candidate Trump went all over the country saying that he was going to be a President for the forgotten Americans, that he was going to be a President that looked out for working people, and he said he was going to focus on bringing costs down and prices down in the United States of America.

And yet, ever since he was sworn in, he has done just the opposite. Prices are going up—including, as the Senator was talking about, housing prices. Affordable housing is a crisis in this country, and yet we see Elon Musk and his DOGE cronies cutting deeply into affordable housing programs over at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

We see also—and tomorrow, he calls it Liberation Day; it is actually going to be Sales Tax Increase Day—there was testimony that we got in the Banking and Housing Committee that when you increase these tariffs on Canada, as he has proposed to do—not in a targeted way but in an across-the-board way—according to the National Association of Home Builders, that will increase housing prices for Americans up to 10 percent more at a time when we are already facing an affordable housing crisis.

And, of course, the folks who benefit the most are those billionaires who are part of his Cabinet and others in the hedge fund industry who are going out and buying up a lot of houses, not because they need the house for their family but because they want to flip it at a big profit, making it even less affordable to the American people.

So the housing crisis is one part of what is getting even worse because of the actions of Donald Trump and Elon Musk. And it is part of this greater theme of the great betrayal.

Later this week, Republicans here in the Senate say they are planning to bring to the floor what we call a budget resolution, which is a framework that will be providing for very big tax cuts for the ultra-rich Americans, tax cuts for big corporations, some of which are offshoring all of their profits.

Senator WYDEN and I were on the floor, just last week, talking about how Pfizer has half of its sales revenues here in the United States but books none of its profits here, and, therefore, by this scheme called round-tripping where you sort of push your money around the world, they lower their taxes, which means the American people get shortchanged.

So all of this is part of a scheme to provide tax cuts for the very wealthy at everybody else's expense.

The Senator from New Jersey has been shining a light on what it means when we say this will come at the ex-

pense of other Americans, that this tax cut for the very rich and big corporations will come at the expense of the rest of America. I want to amplify that as I do a windup to the Senator.

No. 1, it is Elon Musk and the DOGE operation. Let me be very clear that this is part of the most corrupt bargain we have seen in American history. Elon Musk spent \$280 million to help elect Donald Trump President, and Donald Trump has turned the keys to the Federal Government over to Elon Musk, not for efficiency but to rig the government in favor of people like Elon Musk.

That is why they want to get rid of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This is a Bureau that has returned billions of dollars to Americans who were cheated by scam artists, and they are coming in to dismantle the CFPB because they want to be on the side of the scam artists and deny American consumers the benefit of getting their dollars back when they have been cheated.

So this has nothing to do with government efficiency. It has to do both with rigging the government for people like Elon Musk and trying to lay the groundwork claiming lots of cuts that they will then use to pay for, they say, tax cuts for the very rich.

So who is being cut by Elon Musk?

I don't know, Senator, if you saw the other day in the sort of spin room at the White House—did you catch that, where Elon Musk and some of his folks were explaining the work they did?

They said: We are really doing this with a scalpel.

Well, the reason that is especially interesting is it was just weeks earlier when Elon Musk brandished a chain saw, right?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. At CPAC, which is actually—they met over here in my State of Maryland.

That is what they are doing. They are taking a chain saw, and they are taking a chain saw to Departments that help our veterans. These are people who care for our veterans, and our veterans are being especially hard-hit, including when they did these firings—arbitrary firings, right?—of probationary employees, and veterans were saying: Why are we being hit so hard?

The White House spokesperson said:

Perhaps they are not fit to have a job at the moment.

That was the response from one of the White House spokespersons, as if the individuals who served our country in the military were not fit to serve our government as civilians. That is the kind of attitude we have got.

We just learned today that the RIFs—the reduction-in-force letters—were received by the folks in the Department of Health and Human Services.

So these are people who help with the public health of all Americans. And they do important work at FDA, or the Food and Drug Administration. They

make sure that the foods we eat and the medicines we take are safe and that they do what they say they are going to do in the case of medicines.

They do work at NIH, the National Institutes of Health, to develop cures and treatments for diseases that hit every American family, and they are cutting there.

They are cutting in these places not for government efficiency but to create what they believe is the space for tax cuts for the very rich. We talked about what they are doing over at the Department of Health, at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

At the Social Security Administration—which, by the way, has its headquarters in my State of Maryland—we have thousands of workers who were there to deliver hard-earned benefits to the American people. And the reality is that the Social Security Administration operates incredibly efficiently.

You know the former Commissioner for Social Security, Martin O'Malley, reminds us that Allstate Insurance Company operates at an 11-percent overhead. Liberty Mutual operates at a 23-percent overhead. The Social Security Administration: .5 percent overhead.

The Social Security Administration workforce is now at a very low level in terms of personnel, compared to what it was years ago. And yet they are serving a record number of Americans—73 million Americans—and they have never missed a payment. They have never missed a payment.

So this talk about going after Social Security and that they are going to somehow make it more efficient—and, of course, Elon Musk called it a Ponzi scheme, when the Senator and I know it is not a Ponzi scheme. It is a promise to the American people.

So, first, they discontinue telephone service, as if all the seniors could, somehow, just connect, you know, by Wi-Fi, or whatever it may be. A lot of people, of course, rely on telephones. So they cut that. They said: Well, if you have trouble, go to one of the local regional Social Security offices. Well, they are cutting regional Social Security offices—lots of them.

And then, when you go there and you don't find many people there—you know, whoops, we just cut 7,000 people from Social Security. So a benefit is meaningless if you can't actually access the benefit. And what they are doing is making it harder for Americans to get those benefits.

So when we hear about the Musk-DOGE operation, make no mistake, it is not about efficiency. It is about trying to put together some kind of savings that they then want to use to at least just partially pay for tax cuts for the very rich.

Another way they are doing that—we have heard a lot about that; the Senator spoke about it—is cutting Medicaid and food nutrition programs. In fact, I think we recall, a number of weeks ago, that we had a couple of

amendments here on the floor of the Senate, saying: OK, if you are going to do these tax cuts, at least don't cut Medicaid or Medicare or food and nutrition programs.

Every Republican Senator voted against those amendments—in other words, not to protect those programs—meaning they are fair game for big cuts to pay for tax cuts for the very wealthy.

So that is another area where they are very focused, which is cutting important programs that benefit millions and millions of Americans.

There is another way they are doing it—and to the Senator from New Jersey, again, thank you for shining a light on all this; he has talked about it—which is these across-the-board tariffs.

So I think all of us know that strategically targeted tariffs can be useful, at certain points in time, to protect strategic American industries. I am for those. But across-the-board tariffs and across-the-board tariffs on a friend and ally like Canada or Mexico—all that is, is a tax increase on the American people. Let's be clear.

So these are the areas where Donald Trump, having said that he was going to be there for working people, is doing the opposite, right? These across-the-board tariffs are going to increase costs and prices for the American people. Cutting Medicaid and food nutrition programs is going to hurt the very people that Donald Trump on the campaign trail said he was fighting for.

And the DOGE-Musk operation is taking a chain saw to important services and important consumer protections that benefit all Americans in order to claim that they are providing some savings for tax cuts for the rich.

So it wasn't that long ago that, just down the hall here, Donald Trump was sworn in as President. And I remember what he said. He said:

This is going to be a golden age for America.

And who was sitting right behind him? Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, and other billionaires in the Trump Cabinet, including one who just said, not that long ago, that Americans on Social Security wouldn't miss one of their Social Security checks; only the fraudsters would notice that.

Say that to the 73 million people who get Social Security. But that is the attitude of the billionaires in this Trump Cabinet, the people he is really looking out for.

So when he says "a golden age for America," that is who he means. He means Elon Musk and the billionaires—Elon Musk, who is rigging the government for the billionaires and all the others in the Cabinet who don't think Americans would miss a Social Security payment that they earned.

So my question to you—and I want to, again, thank the Senator from New Jersey. I know it has been a long day's journey into the night, but it is important that we address these issues in the

courts—and the courts are upholding the rule of law—that we address these issues and then fight them in Congress, and that we do so in communities across the country, and people need to understand what is happening.

So the core issue here, is it not, my friend, that Donald Trump really is betraying the people he said he was going to fight for, and, at the end of the day—and we will see that later this week in the Senate—the goal is to provide these big tax breaks to wealthy people at the expense of everybody else in America. That is the big betrayal.

So if you could just zero in, once again, on the central narrative that we are seeing play out in the Trump administration.

Mr. BOOKER. You are putting it right. Donald Trump made commitments to America. We have quotes of him at rally after rally. He said: "Grocery," that is a really great word, he said. I am going to bring down grocery prices.

Well, grocery prices are up dramatically. The American dream, many of us see that as owning a home. Well, you said it: Home prices are already up, but with these tariffs, they can go upward of 10 percent or more. You can be sure that the Canadian lumber coming down here is going to be expensive.

You can see Donald Trump making it more difficult to access healthcare, and this massive reconciliation is going to be a direct attack on working-class healthcare, on healthcare of expectant mothers, on healthcare of Americans with disabilities, on healthcare of the majority of seniors in nursing homes.

I am about to go to my next chapter. It is all going to be about how Trump is rolling back commonsense protections for clean air and water. ELIZABETH WARREN said it very powerfully: He is reducing services, which is a service cut to people with Social Security. In so many ways, Americans should see these crises looming—these attacks—but ask yourself one economic question: With the stock market, which just had its worst quarter in years, and people's retirement savings, if they have it in 401(k)'s, is going down—ask yourself this question. I ask Americans, please, ask yourself this financial question: Am I better off than I was 71 days ago? Am I better off or worse off?

And this is before he has even gotten going, because we see what is about to happen with this whole sham reconciliation process. They are already trying to change the rules to obscure what they are doing.

This is what they are doing. Three things you should take home:

Are we going to let them again—like they did with the ACA, with the Affordable Care Act—come after healthcare for 70-plus million Americans by doing their proposed \$880 billion cuts?

Are we going to allow them to blow a hole so big, in the trillions of dollars? They are going to push it out over 10 years. They are going to create such a

deficit in our country that our children's children—they are stealing from our children's children and putting on a deficit that they are going to have to pay for.

No. 3, are they going to let them do all of that to renew tax cuts that the Congressional Budget Office, a very independent Agency, says very clearly would give trillions of dollars of tax cuts that go disproportionately to the wealthiest in our Nation.

That is the addition. That is what we know. And it doesn't account for the things he is doing to our allies. It doesn't account for how he is turning his back on NATO. It doesn't account for how he is praising Putin and calling Zelenskyy a dictator. It doesn't account for how he is giving advantage to China around the world, from the region in Southeast Asia all the way to Africa. It doesn't account for how he has already made it harder to enroll in the Affordable Care Act. It doesn't account for all the other things he is doing that we wake up and hear every day, not to mention trying to threaten Greenland, trying to threaten Panama, trying to change the name of the Gulf of Mexico.

All these things he didn't tell us he was going to do, didn't promise. He promised to lower your grocery prices; they are higher. He promised to be a better steward of the economy; it is worse than what he inherited it. Over and over, he is breaking promises and doing outrageous things, like disappearing people off of American streets, violating fundamental principles of this document, invoking the Alien Enemies Act from the 1700s that was last used to put Japanese-Americans in internment camps.

Do we see what is happening? How much is enough? We have to stand and do something different not just in this body but in America because—you know this—how we stopped him in his last term was the American people rose up, spoke up, stood up, rose up in the most extraordinary, nonviolent demonstrations and demands.

So thank you.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. And I see my friend and colleague Senator ALSOBROOKS from the great State of Maryland is on the floor, so I am going to be very brief with this question.

I want to thank you for reminding us, of course, of the other great betrayal that has been going on over the last 70-plus days. There is the betrayal against the American people and working people here at home, but there has been a betrayal of our allies, like the Ukrainians, whom Donald Trump is throwing under the bus as we speak, and other close partners and allies around the world.

I have to depart here for a moment because we have a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and

I am privileged to serve on that committee with the gentleman from New Jersey. One of the people before the committee is their nominee to be our Ambassador to Turkey.

Now, of course, Erdogan just locked up his major opponent, the popular mayor of Istanbul. We have not heard a peep from the Trump administration about the question of how this undermines democracy.

But I want to close on the point that you just raised. It is kind of hard for Donald Trump to complain about Erdogan disappearing people when right here in the United States of America, you had a Turkish student at Tufts disappeared by people who showed up without any identification, some with hoods on, and sent her apparently to Louisiana because she spoke out on an important issue of national concern.

The First Amendment is pretty clear that you can engage in controversial speech that someone may like or dislike, but you are protected. That includes everybody here in America because that is an important value to us. Apparently, it is not an important value to Donald Trump, who, like Erdogan, essentially wants to whisk away anybody who disagrees with him.

I again thank the Senator from New Jersey and just ask him, you know, to elaborate on that. But I also see my friend and colleague the Senator from Maryland.

Mr. BOOKER. I will give a short answer to your question, then, which is the irony—the irony that this President is remaining quiet about folks that are violating international law in many ways.

So I think it is absurd, and you are right. It is another betrayal.

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. First, I would like to commend my colleague. I want to thank you first of all for your spiritual obedience. I want to thank you so much as well for your commitment and your dedication. I want to thank you as well for your courageous leadership.

I want to thank you also, Senator BOOKER, for your recognition of the times that we are living in. These are times that we will recount and our children will recount, and I think all of those of good conscience who watch during this time and say nothing will also be held to account.

As the Senator has eloquently remarked, these are not normal times. We are watching an administration that is drunk with vengeance, hatred, and surrounded by incompetent people who are taking callous actions, who are inhumane, and, because of their incompetence, are making costly mistakes that will harm the American people and denigrate the hard-working people of this country by proposing tax cuts.

These tax cuts are not designed to help the average American person;

they are designed to help billionaires. They are doing so by firing thousands of middle-class workers and more.

What we are seeing before our eyes is not only unconscionable; we know as well that it is deeply immoral, that it is inhumane, it is wicked.

We are seeing—with glee—the actions of people who are so happy to tear down, but I am watching and waiting to see what it is they intend to build in this country.

In your remarks over these hours, you have made that plain for the American people to see. You have uplifted the stories of everyday people. And what we recognize as we hear about the firings and we hear about the devastation and chaos is that we are not talking about numbers, we are talking about humans, about people. These are our friends. These are our family members. These are our neighbors. These are our church friends. These are our colleagues this administration has harmed.

So my question today centers around the topic of housing. We have a housing crisis in this country. That is no secret. In fact, we recognize that, through the actions of this administration, what is harmful will be exacerbated.

Maryland is nearly 100,000 housing units short, and as you know, it is both about affordability and a supply problem. We need to make home ownership, which is part of the American dream and how the average American builds wealth in this country, accessible to more Americans.

I think about my parents, Mr. Senator, who married at 21 and 22 years old. At the time that they married, although my father was a car salesman and selling newspapers and my mother was a receptionist, 5 years into their marriage, they could afford to buy a home.

This is no longer the expectation of the average American family. My own 19-year-old daughter doesn't have the realistic hope that she can follow even her grandparents. This problem affects red States, and it affects blue States, which is the theme that you have hit on in all of these hours of speaking.

When this President acts against the interests of the middle class, we recognize that he is not just harming Democrats, as he intends, but unfortunately his actions harm everyday Americans. It affects those who voted for him, it affects those who didn't vote for him, and it affects those who did not vote at all. He is harming Republicans too. He is harming Americans.

This administration is slashing funding and personnel at the very Agencies that are tasked with addressing this crisis. He is illegally firing HUD employees. This administration has stalled millions of dollars in previously allocated funding intended to help those who need affordable housing. Again, his actions are so indiscriminate, so immoral, so callous, so heartless that he is impacting the very peo-

ple who supported him as well as those who didn't.

This administration has effectively ended enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, one of the most important American civil rights laws. This administration is considering privatizing the Federal Housing Finance Agency, which guarantees over half of the U.S. mortgage market. To make matters worse, this administration is proposing sweeping tariffs on our allies, driving up the cost of home construction.

Let's be clear. Absolutely none of this will help to build homes. None of this will make home ownership more accessible to Marylanders or Americans. In fact, we understand that it is not the intention of this administration to do so; it is for the billionaires, to be able to afford their tax cuts.

(Mr. CURTIS assumed the Chair.)

So I have heard from people all across my State—blue areas, red areas, purple areas, every area—who are concerned about this.

So I have a question for you, and I want to thank you as I ask the question, for sacrificing your own body today to bring attention to this. What are you seeing in the State of New Jersey about how this administration's unconscionable actions are making housing less affordable and home ownership less accessible?

Mr. BOOKER. I want to thank the Senator for the question. I want to thank her for being my colleague. But more important than even being my friend, she is a spiritual sister of mine and was very kind to me when I was telling her that I was going to do this and gave me so much encouragement and prayer.

And I just love you, and I am grateful.

You read a litany of things. I had a whole section, a whole binder that my staff told me to skip to go to this one about all the things, going in deep, in-depth to all the things the Trump administration is doing to make housing more unaffordable, more inaccessible, more expensive, more discrimination in housing, which we know is still a problem, more challenges, more pain heaped upon rural areas, and more complications and problems for building affordable housing in all areas.

It is so frustrating to me that this is a problem. We cannot lay the crisis of housing at one administration in the United States. We need to have bold visions and ideas to address this. I am so excited about this next generation of Americans that are rising up with bold visions.

I want to give a shout-out to Ezra Klein. His book is a must read—"Abundance." This is a vision of doing great things again, of building housing, of redeeming the American dream.

But to have a President that is dead set on, for the next 4 years, doing the kinds of things that you made a litany of and now, tomorrow, is going to bring tariffs that are going to raise the price even more on housing is outrageous.

Where are his promises to make this country more affordable and more accessible?

You heard the data that I read about how we have so many millions of Americans—close to the majority of renters now spend more than a third of their income on rent, which is the very definition that our government has of housing insecurity.

So it should anger people in this country. Even if you own your home, have paid off your mortgage, you should be angry about what they are doing to the American dream and that there are no bold ideas coming from this administration to help. In fact, they are hurting it. They are hurting it.

So thank you very much to my colleague. Thank you for giving me strength, as you did, and prayer. I thank you for the question that should anger people, that should inspire people, that should activate people, that should engage people, that should demand from us that we take our country away from those who want to do so much harm.

I want to start by reading until someone—I know the prayer. I am going to keep going. I want to talk about environmental protections and how this country is becoming less safe for people with emphysema or with asthma because Donald Trump is rolling back commonsense environmental protections, threatening our children's future, and hurting our Nation's economy.

Energy costs in America are continuing to rise, making it harder and harder for working families to pay their bills. At a time when we should be investing in clean energy, this administration is canceling projects that would create more jobs for Americans and lower energy prices. He claims he supports an "all of the above" strategy, but that is clearly not what we are seeing, and there is too much silence about it.

All Americans, regardless of where you are born, deserve safe drinking water, clean air, and equal opportunity for a healthy and fulfilling life.

President Trump promised America the cleanest air and the cleanest water, but on entering office, he immediately instructed the EPA—the Environmental Protection Agency—to cut a long list of commonsense environmental protections. This administration is rolling back efforts to reduce emissions from powerplants. He is letting polluters pollute our air more. That affects the health of Americans. It drives up the aggravating of the rates of asthma and emphysema, weakening rules that keep our rivers and water systems clean as well.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the order of February 29, 1960, the hour of 12 noon having arrived, the Senate having been in continuous ses-

sion since yesterday, the Senate will suspend for a prayer by the Senate Chaplain.

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord of Hosts, you have done great things for us, filling our hearts with determination to do Your will. You protect us from unseen dangers, supply us with wisdom, and direct our steps.

Today, we are grateful for the efforts of the floor staff, the Capitol Police, the stenographers, the pages, and all those who have worked through the night. We pray You give them the strength they need for this day.

Today, give our Senators the assurance of Your presence, inspire them with a calm faith, a steady peace, and a firm resolve to do Your will. Let no weapon formed against them prosper.

We pray in Your omnipotent Name. Amen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BOOKER. I am going to continue until one of my colleagues asks me a question.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. One of my heroes in the Senate—a living legend, my partner on some bills that I am so passionate about, expanding IVF—someone that is just freaking awesome, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Senator BOOKER, for taking this important stand and for doing so much to make it clear how much pain Donald Trump and Elon Musk are inflicting on the American people in every sector of our society.

I am going to be asking you a question about what you heard from agriculture businesses in your State about the damage this administration is doing and the jobs that either have been or will be lost as a result. I thought I would give you some background on what I am hearing as well.

I want to focus this body's attention on our Nation's farmers and ranchers who seem to be getting punched day after day, week after week by the Trump-Musk oligarchy. Whether it is their harmful tariffs that hurt our soy and corn farmers, canceling and freezing more than \$1 billion in funding for schools and food banks that purchase food from local farmers, or halting reimbursement and contract payments that our farmers already owed.

The Senator from New Jersey and I are both working together to undo some of the most harmful impacts of these disastrous decisions, including joining forces to push his Honor Farmers Contract forward. We are starting to hear reports by farmers how damaging the Musk-Trump dismantling of USAID is to jobs and businesses right here in America.

For example, I don't know if the Senator has heard, but in North Carolina, they had \$2.2 billion in USAID awards, including for 27 large-scale farmers who were fulfilling orders to humanitarian food assistance and four universities who were receiving agriculture research funding. More than 300 North Carolina workers have lost their jobs as a result of this freeze.

In Georgia, they had over \$389 million in USAID awards, including nine large-scale farmers fulfilling orders for humanitarian food assistance and six universities receiving agriculture research funding.

Arkansas had over \$210 million in USAID awards, including purchases of rice, grain, and beans from our farmers.

Florida has lost \$91 million in USAID awards, including \$38 million for the University of Florida to improve livestock productivity and food security in developing countries.

Texas lost over \$48 million in USAID awards, including nine large-scale farmers fulfilling orders for humanitarian food assistance and eight universities receiving agriculture research funding. The list goes on and on.

My neighbors in Iowa, over time now, have lost over \$4 million in USDA food commodity sales. They have gained—they had a total of over \$149 million in purchases through USDA and other programs for USAID. Illinois has lost \$245 million in aid that—in farm income, that would go toward USAID and aid programs.

I think that our farmers have been hit with body blow after body blow from this administration, an administration that in their first term and even in the second term promised they would look out for America.

I have to say to my friend from New Jersey, I don't think that this administration has lived up to their promises to farmers. Remember that a Nation that cannot feed itself—if we lose those family farms, if we lose our ag sector—we cannot lead the free world if we cannot feed ourselves. And, frankly, farmers have been hit over and over again.

These incoming tariffs are going to be a disaster for our farmers. I was in south central and southern Illinois across the river from Missouri talking to our farmers in St. Clair County, IL. They tell me the tariffs are going to affect their products being sold overseas. Our top products in Illinois: corn, soybean, pork.

We are also the largest grower of pumpkins. If you get the Libby can of pumpkin at Halloween time and Christmastime, Thanksgiving, that is thanks to Illinois. If you ever want to come, I will take you out to the pumpkin fields. They are the best pumpkins in the country.

But frankly, they are being hurt over and over again. So they are going to see the prices on their commodities affected. They can't sell their products overseas to the top countries that purchase their product. At the same time,

their inputs—the fertilizer and the equipment that they need—will be more expensive.

Tariffs against Canada, in terms of steel and aluminum, is affecting John Deere. John Deere—hundreds of years old, an American company founded in the heartland of this great Nation laying off people.

We have to do better by our farmers. Our farmers have been betrayed time and time again by this Trump administration. They promise big things and come in cutting programs like USAID. They hurt our farmers, their bottom line.

I sat down and met with many farmers who are seventh generation, eighth generation, watching the teenage son of the farmer and they are afraid they are not going to have a farm there anymore. Their products and margins are so tiny, they don't think they are going to make it.

My question to my colleague from New Jersey is what are you hearing from farmers and why do you think this administration is taking so many actions that hurt them and hurt American jobs?

Mr. BOOKER. I love my colleague—I love my colleague—I love how she has been standing up, quite figuratively, time and time again on issues. She really inspired me. I told folks on social media, I have been celebrating, elevating, liking her content. She is truly fierce and is a voice that gives me strength.

Today, she is asking me about one of my favorite subjects. A lot of people are surprised. My staff knows this story well that I am on the Ag Committee. When one of my staffers, a guy sitting over here, Adam Zipkin—who has been with me since 1998—came to me and said you should go on the farm committee—this is going to get me in trouble. I laughed at him. It is one of the committees I love. What is the old saying? First, they laugh at you, then they fight you, then they finally accept it. He told me all the issues I care about intersect with our farm and food system; that our farmers are such vital parts of America, they need more people standing up and fighting for them.

The American farmers are getting screwed. We are losing thousands of farms in this country, family farmers are going belly-up. The math doesn't work for them. And this President, as you have pointed out—oh, gosh. President Trump is causing an unprecedented amount of chaos, instability, and harm for farmers.

Farmers already deal with so much uncertainty from prices, weather, pests, and more. They should not have to deal with uncertainty that our government won't follow through, as you said, on contracts. I had farmers from New Jersey to Texas coming to my office about this President freezing contracts that we approved in a bipartisan manner, putting them in financial crisis.

One of the first things that Trump and Musk did was freeze thousands of

contracts and agreements that have been already made with our farmers, farmers applied to grant programs and were selected on their merit. They made legally binding contracts. Yet starting in late January, farmers found themselves not getting reimbursed, sometimes reading in the news that a particular grant was frozen or sometimes no information at all other than they were not getting their payments processed.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Would the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I think the issue of contracts is especially important because so much of these cuts are claimed to cut waste in government spending. But we have a law on the books that says if we don't make payments according to existing contracts, then we have to pay the interest on those payments that we are late in providing. So if we, for example, cut \$2 billion or freeze funding payment on \$2 billion in contracts as we did with USAID, that means we are going to have to pay, say, 2-percent interest rate, \$16 billion in interest. I don't see where that is a saving for taxpayers. That is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

I think that is something we should be talking about, and I also think that, as you were mentioning, the issue with our farmers, they are important to our national security.

The SNAP program is a good example of it. That program was instituted after World War II. We had the very famous example of Audie Murphy, who was the most highly decorated soldier coming out of World War II. He could not pass initial tests to enlist into the Army during World War II. He didn't weigh enough due to malnutrition post the Great Depression. He created the SNAP program to make sure America's young people were fed, were no longer malnourished, so they could get food in our schools while going to school because it was good for the U.S. military to have a workforce that could enlist in the military and meet the standards. That is the SNAP program, and that has been a program that has sustained our farmers over time. I think that we are losing sight of that.

So my question to the Senator from New Jersey is to hear a little bit more—have you heard about the SNAP program and also the work the farmers in New Jersey have been doing in terms of organic and sustainable farming, which is really where the beginning of the organic and sustainable farming movement has begun in this country?

Mr. BOOKER. I am aware of one of our colleagues.

I just want to say, yes, I am aware of that. The way that Trump—I am just going to summarize—contract freezes, this is one of the ways Trump and Musk are causing havoc. Program cuts. They have eliminated programs that you said support local food systems, in-

cluding those that connect farmers with food banks and schools and promote regenerative practices. It is stunning.

USDA destabilization. Trump and Musk have laid off USDA employees, closed USDA offices, hindering the Agency's ability to provide essential services to foreigners.

Tariff policies. Trump's tariff policies implemented without consultation with or support from farmers will increase farmer costs and consumer food prices.

And, finally, general chaos, which seems to be something you are pointing out that they are very good at. Farmers already deal with so much uncertainty from prices, weather, pests, and more. They should not have to deal with uncertainty from Donald Trump's administration that will undermine everything that they do.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I have a further question for the Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I would like to ask the Senator from New Jersey a question pertaining to the farm bill. You speak to uncertainty. One of the things I heard from my agricultural sector and my farmers, the Farm Bureau in Illinois, is that desperate need to pass—for this body to pass a farm bill, especially when it comes to the Crop Insurance Program, as well as, again, retaining SNAP benefits.

I do think that crop insurance is something that our farmers care deeply about. It is a tool that they use to make sure that they are able to survive when there are bad crop years, whether that is through disease, whether that is through drought or floods. Our farmers certainly—this is a program for them to sustain themselves and be able to look out for themselves.

So it is a personal responsibility on the part of farmers. It is especially important for young farmers who are just running out. Those margins are just so tiny. And when you take away the commodity program and USAID, when you take away the SNAP program, then you don't provide them with crop insurance, you are going to lose those family farms. What is going to happen? Large agriculture businesses are going to take over.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. They don't have the well-being of the American people at their heart.

What I would love to hear from the Senator from New Jersey is, would you agree that what we should be doing right now is not attacking farmers and cutting commodity programs and cutting and freezing funding for USAID that provides a market for farm product, but we should be working on passing a farm bill?

Mr. BOOKER. I love you. I love you. I love you for bringing these things to point because we—by the way, with Adam Zipkin, we did a farm tour. We

were in southern Illinois, meeting with Republican farmers—this is before the pandemic—and you see them give so much common cause as they are trying desperately to hold on to their farms. So, with the Crop Insurance Program, we need to reimagine it so it is more accessible to independent family farmers and not just big agribusinesses. We need to be visionary about our farm bill. We need to create a food system so that the farmers will want to help them be better stewards of the land—the oversubscribed programs for regenerative farming and cover crops and environmental practices. They want those things to preserve their soil and to reduce their dependence on chemicals. They want those things. They want a farm bill that works for them, and we should be delivering that in a bipartisan way. So you are right on point. But do you hear that from the White House? Not at all. Not at all.

Ms. HASSAN. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. HASSAN. Well, Senator BOOKER, I have a question for you about Medicaid and Medicaid expansion, but I want to start with a little bit of background.

Mr. BOOKER. Please.

Ms. HASSAN. As you may recall, when I was Governor of New Hampshire, thanks to the Affordable Care Act, the program Medicaid expansion became an option for my State, and I worked with people of both political parties to make sure that the people of New Hampshire could actually get the benefit of Medicaid expansion.

Expanded Medicaid meant that for the first time, working adults who couldn't earn enough money to actually buy insurance themselves but who were working and single could actually get healthcare coverage. Medicaid expansion meant that people with mental illness who wouldn't be covered by traditional Medicaid actually could get healthcare and could get coverage. People with substance use disorder—with addiction—could finally get Medicaid coverage and get better.

We worked across party lines. It took a few tries, but we got Medicaid expansion done in New Hampshire, and today, Medicaid covers more than 180,000 people in my State, including more than 90,000 children, more than 15,000 people with disabilities, and nearly 10,000 seniors.

Here is another number that people don't always think about: It covers 10,000 people who are getting addiction treatment. My State, as you know, has been very, very hard hit by the fentanyl crisis, and you know, when the President gave his joint address in March, I brought a woman from New Hampshire with me who had been suffering from addiction. Medicaid expansion covered her treatment. She got into recovery. She is now working in the private sector but also offering counseling and peer recovery services

to people who are trying to get their addiction treated through Medicaid expansion, and she is now on private insurance.

I remember talking to another Granite Stater while we were working to pass Medicaid expansion. She had been laid off from her job as part of the great recession, right? She had had an ongoing, chronic stomach condition. As she got laid off, her health insurance went away, too, and she couldn't afford the COBRA fee to keep her health insurance. She couldn't get healthcare, so she got sicker and sicker, and she couldn't go to work. But because she was a single adult, she couldn't get Medicaid coverage. So here is somebody who has been working, who wants to work, who has a chronic illness and can't get to work. We passed Medicaid expansion. She got coverage, she got treatment, and she got back to work.

The other great benefit of Medicaid expansion covering people with addiction in New Hampshire has been that, as people have gotten better and as more and more physicians have learned to integrate addiction care into primary care, we have a lot more people in recovery.

Like many of our States, we also have a workforce shortage. What has been happening now? New Hampshire is a leader in recovery-friendly workplaces so that people who got this Medicaid expansion coverage got their addictions treated, got better, can go to work in the private sector, and get private insurance. That is some of the benefit of Medicaid expansion.

But, of course, what we are hearing about now from the House and Senate Republicans is their desire to make massive cuts to Medicaid, including Medicaid expansion, and they are doing it. They want to rip away healthcare from millions of Americans so that they can pay for big tax breaks for billionaires and corporate special interests.

The Republicans have proposed cutting up to a third of Federal funding for Medicaid. If those cuts go into effect, that could mean 30,000 children in my State will lose their healthcare coverage. That means one in five seniors in New Hampshire could lose their nursing home care. All told, that could mean 60,000 people cut off from Medicaid, including, for instance, a young man whose parents I just met at the airport, actually, who has autism. Medicaid pays for his healthcare, but he could be cut off too.

So if Republicans continue with this plan, I am really, really concerned about what is going to happen to the millions of Americans who currently get their healthcare through Medicaid.

Senator BOOKER, can you address the ways in which Medicaid helps provide healthcare for Americans and the disastrous impact it would have if Republicans proceed with their plan to take coverage away from up to 25 million Americans just so that they can pay for big tax breaks, by the way, for people who are already billionaires?

Mr. BOOKER. Before I answer the Senator's question, I just want anybody who is watching to know that—and I will put it bluntly—this is one of the baddest ass human beings serving here in the Senate. You have been the Governor of a State with all the challenges. You are beloved. I have spent a lot of time in New Hampshire.

Folks, after New Jersey, it is one of my favorite new States. No disrespect to New Mexico over here on my right. But I love your State. I love the people of your State, and they love you.

You were an extraordinary Governor. You were a trailblazer, a glass ceiling breaker, a name-taker. You are a bad ass. And to have served with you as my colleague, you have the kind of leadership in the Senate that it needs more of, that of somebody who stands in the middle and draws people together to common sense and pragmatism.

I started on healthcare—

Ms. HASSAN. Yes.

Mr. BOOKER.—you know, some 16 or so hours ago, and you would be proud of me because she is one of these voices who comes to me and says: Hey, CORY. Let's bring people together.

I know that the Presiding Officer is new here, but he has the same spirit of trying to bring people together. This might be like the third time I have seen him in the chair over the last hours—17 hours.

Thank you, sir.

But you whisper in my ear all the time, like we have got to find a way to do this together. We have got to find a way to put more "indivisible" into "one nation under God."

So I hope that you would be proud because I told my staff, who prepared for days—they spent days preparing all these sections, from farming to the environment and all the ways that Donald Trump is betraying his promises, betraying America, driving up costs, wrecking our economy, endangering us globally and here at home, and turning his back on a lot of our values, all while disrespecting this document more than any President I have seen.

But I wanted to make sure—I told the instructions to my staff to pull from all the Republicans you can. We want to use the Wall Street Journal. We want to use the Cato Institute. We want to bring this together because why we are standing up here is not to talk about left or right; we are talking about what is right or wrong. I do not want to talk about this being a Democratic moment; it is a moral moment.

You are the perfect Senator to be asking these questions about healthcare to, to me, because of what you stand for. You got elected as Governor—twice, I think. When you get elected to the Senate here, you have to get votes from Democrats, Independents, and Republicans or you can't win in New Hampshire. I have been in your State, and I have met the people. God, you have a very participatory democracy up there.

Ms. HASSAN. Yes, we do.

Mr. BOOKER. People feel like, if you are not going from north to south to house parties, you have to engage directly with the people. They don't care what party you ascribe to; they want to feel you, see you. They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. That is why I think you are such a bad ass leader.

So you would have been proud of me when I did the healthcare section because I read from Republican Governors and Democratic Governors. Forty States have expanded Medicaid, and all of these Governors and all of these voices said exactly what you are intimating here, which is, do not let Donald Trump cut \$880 billion out of Medicaid. It will crush rural hospitals. It will crush level I trauma care centers. It will crush organizations that deal with beautiful disabled children. It will crush people who are struggling for healthcare. It will crush nursing homes. It will hurt red counties and blue counties. It will hurt America. Republican voices were saying that.

To have a bipartisan Senator who embodies the spirit this place should ascribe to more say these things is affirming the truth.

Why? Why are they rushing to cut \$880 billion, which voice after voice whom I read said that it would do so much damage to people's lives, so much damage to healthcare providers, so much damage to hospitals. Why? The only two things that will result from that are that they will extend the Trump tax cuts, where the disproportionate benefits went to the wealthiest among us, who are doing better than they have ever done in this country—they don't need it. Taking money from struggling folks and giving it to them is not the answer.

The other thing is, to a person who, like me, when we were executives—you were a Governor, and I was a mighty mayor. We had to balance our budgets. But they are not balancing the budget. They are not lowering the deficit. They are increasing it by trillions of dollars. This makes no sense to a pragmatic person who has balanced budgets, who expanded healthcare access, who made her State work, and who has loved and respected votes, frankly, from Democrats and Republicans. You know this makes no sense.

So if you are standing up and colleagues of mine further to the left of me, then why aren't other people standing up? Why did only one Republican in the House vote against it? He told the truth. MASSIE.

I see some of my Republican colleagues here.

He is a fiscal hawk. He told the truth. This budget is going to explode the American national debt, stealing from future generations. I can't vote for this. He was not bullied, like other people in the House, into doing what dear leader Donald Trump says.

So, my colleague, you are on the money. I have internalized your voice as there are only a few people's voices

I have internalized. One of them is my mother's, but you are more my peer. You are one of those voices in America right now who we need who does not slip into a partisan argument but makes the pragmatic argument that what Donald Trump is trying to do, with the aiding and abetting of congressional Republicans, is wrong. It is fiscally wrong. It is morally wrong. It will hurt Americans. It is not for the common welfare. It is not for the common defense. Read the start of the Constitution, please. I beg of you. You all swore to uphold it.

How do our Founders begin?

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.

Trillions of dollars of deficit doesn't secure the blessings of liberty; it endangers our country. The common welfare is this idea that everybody should have access to what makes us free. What makes us free is not having medical debt. What makes us free is not being chained to the uncertainty and insecurity that if someone in my family gets sick, I would not be able to afford it. Still the majority or close to the majority of bankruptcies in the United States of America are of people who can't afford their healthcare bills. We need to find better ways to expand access and not cut more people off.

You know this, former Governor: There are a number of States that have these things called triggers, automatic triggers, in that if the funding for Medicaid reduces to covering 90 percent of the costs, what happens in those States? Boom! Medicaid expansion goes offline. So if you don't even cut it \$880 billion and maybe you say we will just do \$250 billion of an ax. States are going to lose their expansion, and people are going to suffer and get hurt. Why? You said it. You said it. You said it.

You and I are the two people who want to see entrepreneurs make money. You and I want to see small business people thrive. We don't hate rich people. We think that is great. It is often, not always—Donald Trump—it is often a sign of people in America who are using the ingenuity, applying it, and being successful. But you and I both know that the richest people in this country don't need more tax cuts. It is morally wrong. It is fiscally wrong. It is wrong in the Name of God and America. How could we be doing this to ourselves?

Ms. HASSAN. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I can't call you one of the baddest ass people I have ever worked with and not yield to your question, but I have to read the words: I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. HASSAN. Well, thank you for yielding the floor for a question while retaining the floor, and thank you for the very nice compliments.

I do have a question for you about Social Security, and then I think another colleague of mine has additional questions.

But, look, as you know, we just talked about my wonderful State, New Hampshire. You also just talked about your mother. And I should just also let you know that my mother always made me memorize the preamble to the U.S. Constitution. So as I listened to you read it, I thought, Mom—

Mr. BOOKER. Shots fired on the Senate floor. Where is the Parliamentarian?

Ms. HASSAN. I hope my mom is watching right now.

Mr. BOOKER. Rule XIX her.

Ms. HASSAN. But here is my question. And just by way of background, as you know, New Hampshire is a small State. It is a very rural State. And, recently, the Trump-Musk forces have announced that they want to close a Social Security office in Littleton, NH.

Now, in Littleton, NH, that Social Security office, which takes applications and provides technical assistance for people who need Social Security or need Medicare or who have questions about their current coverage—it is the northern-most office in New Hampshire.

So they close that office, and now my folks in the North Country—and there are about 334,000 in New Hampshire with Social Security. My people in the North Country will have to drive as far as 100 miles to go to another New Hampshire Social Security office.

And, meanwhile, of course, they are laying off people from Social Security offices, and they are making it harder to get assistance via the telephone, which, as you know, many people who are on Social Security find the telephone the easiest way to make a connection to get technical assistance.

Elon Musk has called Social Security a Ponzi scheme. He says he wants to cut \$700 billion from Social Security and Medicare. So my question to you, as we are looking at an administration that says that it wants to make things more efficient but is actually laying people off, closing offices, making it harder for people to actually connect with a Social Security office—my concerns, of course, are that this is just going to delay claims, delay coverage, make it harder for people to get on Social Security because, actually, Trump and Musk want to cut Social Security. Trump said, of course, that he was going to protect it when it he was running for office, but now he is letting Musk do his cuts.

So, Senator BOOKER, can you speak to the ways in which seniors across the country count on the Social Security benefits that they have paid into?

This is not charity. People pay into the Social Security system. They earn the benefit.

And can you talk about the disastrous impacts if this administration takes benefits—Social Security, Medicare—away from our seniors?

Mr. BOOKER. Last night, I had a whole chapter on Social Security, outlining not just what you said, my colleague, my friend, but stories from seniors. And some of them really got to me. They were hard to read through.

I have to say, I have prepped this by reading a lot of them, but somehow on the floor, when I read about the woman who had Parkinson's, when I read about the person taking care of their elderly parents, a spouse with dementia, children with special needs—and Social Security, it helps a lot of folks. But here is the craziness—the craziness—of the Trump attacks on the Social Security Administration: First, he makes people insecure about it.

My mom lives in this amazing senior home, Las Ventanas, in Las Vegas, NV. Most of the people there—first of all, I love them all for who they are, not their party affiliation. But it is more Republicans than Democrats. And the story my mom tells me about just the worry that they or other people in their family have because of Elon Musk calling it a Ponzi scheme, of Donald Trump talking about utter lies from the highest post in the land, during a joint address, savaging Social Security with lies that everybody, from conservative papers to Democratic papers, to left-leaning papers, have all called that lie, lie, lie, lie, lie—there are not millions of people receiving false payments. They have insinuated so much insecurity that people are writing me letters talking about how they are losing sleep. They have so much anxiety because they only live on their Social Security check.

And Howard Lutnick, whom I know—and I don't know what he was thinking when he said it, a billionaire talking about his mother-in-law—I don't know what you were thinking, Howard. I just don't understand it, how you were saying if she misses a payment, she is OK; but if people complain, they are probably fraudsters. Do you understand how many millions of Americans only have that as their only protection between poverty and destitution; that if they miss a payment, they can't make their rent, they can't buy food?

So they have created so much insecurity, so much fear, and I compared it, Governor—I compared it—to the difference between an FDR and a Donald Trump.

FDR knew people were suffering. He knew people were afraid, and he stood before the American public and didn't lie to them, didn't attack people, didn't demean people, didn't degrade people. He comforted people. He allayed their fears. He inspired them: "You have nothing to fear but fear itself"—what an opposite in leadership.

So, yes, there are a lot of people who, right now, don't know.

But then my colleague from Massachusetts comes in and makes the very clear point—the professor we have in our caucus—she makes a very good point: They have already done benefit cuts because when you close offices in

rural areas, that person who is missing a check or has an issue, now they have to drive—how many miles?

Ms. HASSAN. A hundred miles.

Mr. BOOKER. A hundred miles.

Now, what is that hardship to a senior?

I have heard from people in their nineties. They already are having benefit cuts.

The Wall Street Journal—I told you, I was trying to make you proud. I wanted to get as many sources from anybody that was more center to right, and I read from the Wall Street Journal and said the customer service—the customer service—in Social Security is going from bad to worse. That was the title of the article.

So they are already doing cuts. They are already heaping insecurity on our seniors, heaping inconvenience on our seniors, heaping fear upon our seniors, heaping insecurity, making people lose sleep. This is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. This is not a model of leadership. It is a model of cruelty and mean-spiritedness and hurting people.

When is it enough, America? When is it enough that we say, it may not be my grandmother who depends on that Social Security check, but I love America. And you cannot love Americans, you cannot love America, you cannot call yourself a patriot—please listen to me. You cannot say you love this country and you are a patriot because patriotism is love of country, but you can't love your country unless you love your country men and women.

And love means that if somebody's mother or grandmother is hurting, is afraid, that I am going to stand up and do what I can to comfort them and fight for them because, today, it might be your grandmother; it might be your family with a disabled child.

This is not right or left; it is right or wrong. This is not a partisan moment; it is a moral moment. Where do you stand?

We started this by talking about John Lewis. It is time for good trouble, necessary trouble.

Thank you. Thank you, my friend, even though you made fun of me, before my entire State, for not remembering the very important preamble to the Constitution.

Ms. HASSAN. You did very well.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very much. I take your compliments because you don't give them abundantly or overly well. So thank you very much.

Ms. HASSAN. Thank you.

Mr. LUJAN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Heck no, not to you. Not to you. Not to you.

Let me tell you, I have something to get off of my chest about you. I woke up yesterday morning, and the first thing I did—now, this shirt is all wrinkled and a little ripe. But the first thing I did is grab a gift from you.

People, don't get upset ethics-wise. We are allowed to give each other gifts.

This looks like—I don't know how much it costs, but you gave me—I was

talking about traveling and how we have to pack bags and go all the time. And you told me: I travel with a steamer.

And I pulled out this little steamer for this shirt that I am wearing right now. You are one of the kindest, sweetest people I know. You are one of my closest friends here in the U.S. Senate. And I want to say something about you because, in this moment, as people are watching, I want people to go there.

We had a conversation. You came to my office. It is always a sign of respect when you come to a Senator's office. And you came to my office, and we were talking about social media. And I was encouraging you. You were a little resistant—if you don't mind me outing you—to open up and get more on the platform. We were talking about ideas and talking about Social Security, talking about Medicare and Medicaid.

You opened up to me. And I hope I am not betraying confidences. I asked you just like, what do you do? You are such an amazing human being. You are one of the kindest people I know. I asked you: What do you do on your weekends? What do you do for fun? Let people see it.

Then you kind of made me pause when you said: Well, my mother is kind of getting old—is getting older. I love her so much.

You said: My siblings and I, we alternate weekends, just spending time with our mother.

It was one of the sweetest things I heard. I said to you: What do you do with your mom?

And then you brightened up. And you choked me up, you jerk, because you said: What I love to do with my mom is to dance with her in the kitchen. When we are in the kitchen making food or something, I just love sometimes to put on a song, and we dance.

I don't know why it struck me as beautiful. And this is what I hope people will do right now. I said: Well, why don't you record that?

I didn't think you would do it, that you would ask her if you could do it. But you then put up one of the most beautiful videos I have ever seen, from one of my colleagues, of you and your mom in the kitchen. I think it is on your Instagram page. And I have looked at that video—I am probably all the views right now—of my colleague, this big U.S. Senator, loving his mother so much. And we are talking about that.

I have talked about this on the floor. Great nations respect their elders. They take care of them.

One of my colleagues, when they asked me a question about Social Security, they reminded me of what it was—the greatest anti-poverty program in the history of America; that Social Security rescued millions of Americans from being in poverty. It virtually ended poverty, although the checks now are becoming meager and meager. As prices are going up, more people are getting lower and lower toward poverty. And people who live on those checks live very austere.

But you are just this amazing guy who turns your own lived experience into greater and greater urgencies to fight for the people of New Mexico.

So I did not want to yield for a question before getting that off my chest. You are my friend. You are my colleague. You are my brother. And more than you know it, you are my inspiration.

So, yes, I yield for a question while retaining the floor now. I feel like I have so much power here to yield to my colleagues. They are often more eloquent. I am like afraid of WHITEHOUSE because he is one of the brainiest people in the Senate. But I now have the control.

But for you, now that I have gotten this off my chest and, hopefully, embarrassed you but maybe added a few more views to my favorite video, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. LUJÁN. Senator BOOKER, thank you. I won't be surprised if Mom is watching right now. So you are probably going to get some messages from her.

But I want to thank my friend and colleague from the great State of New Jersey. You have been holding this space for the American people now for well over 17 hours.

While we represent different parts of the country, Senator BOOKER, we have the same values. I learned from you the importance of treating people with respect and dignity. That is what we should all be talking about here today—every day. I have also learned a lot about grace from you.

Now, I come to the floor to ask you a question about farmers. You and I both appreciate the long hours that farmers put in to take care of that soil, their families, the planning that goes into this, sowing the seeds. Sometimes you have to do a little weeding to make sure that we are going to all benefit from the fruits of their labor.

Having fresh food in a grocery store is not something that can be taken for granted. And for a lot of our constituents—I have had these conversations with nominees who have come before us, when they ask me: Well, why is someone just eating potato chips or Doritos from that local store?

I will educate them by saying: That is the only store around.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. There are food deserts everywhere, but we can do something about that. We have programs in place that recognize the importance of getting someone a meal who needs that meal, supporting our farmers out there to sow those seeds, to help them with their planting.

But what I am seeing right now, Senator BOOKER, is our farmers have been on the receiving end of these Federal funds being taken away from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, these reckless tariffs that are hurting farmers and ranchers just as much as they are hurting anyone in America.

Outbreaks, bird flu—people know what the cost of eggs is in the store right now. Then they look into what is going on now. There is this bird flu that is going around.

My constituents ask: Well, why does the U.S. Department of Agriculture under Donald Trump fire the people, epidemiologists, that are responsible for containing this thing?

It just doesn't make any sense to folks.

I was in the Ag Committee earlier today, Senator BOOKER, and I was asking some questions to USDA, and I learned that on March 7, 2025, under the Trump administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture terminated the local food in schools program and the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement. And then they went further, and they also notified grant applicants on March 24 that the fiscal year 2025 competition for the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is canceled.

Why does this matter to farmers and ranchers and people back home? These programs allow food banks and schools and others to purchase food from our local farmers.

Now, our local farmers aren't just making a decision on what seeds are going to be planted so they can sell the lettuce next week. They start this a year going back. So when the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a year ago, started talking to these farmers and ranchers about what programs were going to be in place and then these farmers, responsibly, went and found customers to sell their food—food banks, different groups around the country—they planned the rest of the year to be able to get that nutritious food into the bellies of people that need it most. That sounds like respect and dignity.

Mr. BOOKER. Yep.

Mr. LUJÁN. What is not respectful is when the Trump administration gives them a few days' notice and pulls the rug from under them and cancels the program that is going to allow the food bank—their customer—to buy their food.

What do those farmers have to do now across America?

Now, it gets worse and worse. I won't go into all of it, Senator BOOKER, but here is one of the dirty little secrets: All of these programs that are being taken away from the American people, it is to find an extra dollar for this tax policy under Donald Trump that my constituents started calling back in 2017 the "Trump tax scam."

I asked: Well, why are you calling it that?

They said: Well, everyone promised me—I am making less than the median income, making less than \$80,000, which is a lot of money in New Mexico, across America. The median income there is a little lower.

I was told that we were going to get the brunt of this tax cut, recognizing that we are hard-working and how hard

it is to make ends meet, but that is not what happened. Most of this went to families and folks making over \$2.8 million. I don't have anything against those families. I wish them well. I want them to make more—\$10 million—next year. But they don't need a tax cut. That should be going to those hard-working families that were told that they were being prioritized.

But they are the ones that told us—told me, anyway—that this was a Trump tax scam. That is the secret. That is where all this money is going.

So, Senator BOOKER, whether I am in a grocery store and I am chatting with constituents, we are out there looking at egg prices, or whatever it may be, they are concerned about what is going on here. And all they are asking for me to share with my colleagues here is: Just tell them to tell us the truth.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. LUJÁN. If they are going to vote to take these programs away—they have the votes, my Republican colleagues—just be honest. Treat my constituents with respect and dignity so that they can plan, so that a single mom that has a child whose Medicaid may get ripped away but that child has cancer—how are they going to plan for care in 6 months? So that farmer who started planting seeds recently but was planning over a year on what to do, so they can find another customer so that they are not going to lose that farm as well.

Now, before I ask you this question, sir, I want to end with this: Senator BOOKER, you often share a story of Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address, his second, and the man whose review mattered most to the 16th President of the United States.

Mr. BOOKER. One of my favorite stories.

Mr. LUJÁN. When asked his opinion of Lincoln's performance, former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass replied:

It was a sacred effort.

Let me be the first to say this is a sacred effort, Senator BOOKER, and I am proud to stand alongside you.

So, Senator BOOKER, the question that my constituents and I have for you is: Can the farmers and ranchers of America afford to pay for another Trump tax scam with all this nonsense that is going on?

It is a question I get when I am at church—I will say not during church but after church is OK—or at the grocery store. But when I visit with folks back home, this is what they are asking me.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you for the question. You said it with the same words that literally—I didn't write these words. My staff wrote this little paragraph here: Trump is pulling the rug out from under producers that need stability and reliable markets.

You and I are sitting right by each other in the Ag Committee, and we see this connection that you so beautifully say, this idea that we are separate

from each other. These visible lines that divide us in this country are bunk compared to the strong ties that bind us. That farmer-producer in a rural neighborhood is deeply connected to the person in my community, and I live in an inner city—Newark, NJ. There is a powerful spiritual connection.

And if you talk to that farmer, they have got pride that they are feeding America, and they have pride in the ground. You describe it so beautifully. They have pride in their soil, and they want to be stewards of the land, and they want to create a vibrant American food system. And they rely on people that empower them in that process and don't pull the rug out from under them, drag back contracts, cut programming—especially not those programs that help them get fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy foods to food banks.

If you talk to the food banks, they will attest that families—how grateful they are for those fresh fruits and vegetables. You said it right: Parents want the best quality food for their kids. But this food system is killing them.

And when I heard the new Secretary of HHS talk about: Hey, we need to get greater access to fresh, healthy foods; food is medicine—things I have been saying for years—and then what do they do when they get in there? They cut the very programs that help our farmers get fresh fruits and vegetables to kids to deal with chronic diseases.

How could you say out of one side of your mouth—Trump—oh, I am going to let the MAHA people go their way, and then the first thing you do is cut the programs that help kids get healthy, nutritious foods? It makes no sense. It makes no economic sense. It hurts our farmers. It hurts our farmworkers. It hurts our end users.

It is not fair, and I appreciate your question, sir. Thank you.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Would the Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Let me think about this for a second.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. You take your time thinking about it, sir.

Mr. BOOKER. I want to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE. He has been a colleague and friend for a long time, and he stands right there at that desk for very long speeches. I think I am trying to go a long time; you go a consistency of times. And you have talked about the climate crisis. You have talked about the Supreme Court scams.

You have not only educated Members in this body on these issues; you have educated America. You are a YouTube star now, and I learn from you every time I hear you speak.

So I am a little worried right now, but I am going to step out on faith and yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. So, first question: It has been 17 hours. How are you doing?

Mr. BOOKER. I shall not complain. I shall not complain. But thank you for checking in on me, my friend.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Well, thank you for what you are doing.

Second question, if you would yield for a second question.

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. One of the ways in which I try to discuss what is going on in this country—when people are horrified, anxious, astonished, whatever—is to describe it as the rule of the looters and the polluters. The looters are the creepy billionaires coming to government, trying to figure out how to get even more for themselves.

It used to be that people thought that there was a thing: too rich to steal. That doesn't seem to be a thing for these creepy billionaires. They are more than happy to wreck Social Security so that they can send in their tech bros and their private equity folks to put right what they have broken. And the looting goes on across the entire face of government—scarred and disfigured by Musk and his little Musk-rats, I like to call them.

And then, of course, you have the polluters, who are doing a similar thing, which is to steal from the public. Only instead of stealing from government, they are stealing by dumping their pollution into our common air, into our common climate future, into our waters, into our lands, and defending, through political influence and clout and power and dark money in this building, their privilege to pollute for free.

And the endpoint of both of those is regular Americans, who are getting—to put it bluntly—pretty hosed, so that people on the other side of that—the creepy billionaires who are behind the climate denial scheme, who are out to wreck the American Government so that it can't regulate their conduct or make them behave like honest bankers and investors or insurers or whatever.

React for a moment, if you would, to that framing of our beautiful country now being subject to the really malevolent whims of the big looters and the big polluters.

Mr. BOOKER. Well, first of all, I will say to you that I meet wealthy people, like a group called the Patriotic Millionaires, who advocate for progressive tax policy and are the first to say and speak out against this tax scam.

Again, to me, what does patriotism mean to you? Patriotism, by definition, means love of country. If you don't love your fellow countrymen and women, how do you love your country?

And so what would you do—I actually know what you would do; I don't even need you to answer this question—if somehow you came into a billion or more dollars? You would not be asking for more.

You would literally say: Wait a minute, Republican Congress. Wait a minute, Donald Trump. What you are trying to do is take away healthcare from expectant mothers, from disabled children, and from seniors in order to give me more tax credit.

I would think that the patriotic thing to do, that the thing in love—in love—you would say: Donald Trump, go screw yourself.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. If the Senator would yield for another question, while retaining the floor—

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE.—I would add to your comment and request your response to the observation that not only is this an appalling manifestation of greed by people who already have more money than they are able to spend in their entire lifetimes, but the manner in which they are accomplishing their purpose is pretty loathsome in and of itself because the manner in which they are accomplishing their selfish purposes is to corrupt and degrade this great American democracy that we are all here to defend.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. And they do it by taking their billions and running it through phony front groups so it pops up as dark money in elections. And of course, the beneficiary of the dark money, the candidate, figures out exactly who is behind the big dark money contribution that ends up in the super PAC that is supporting them.

And of course, the big donor knows that they gave the money, so the deal between the creepy billionaire and the in-hoc-to-them political candidate is made. But because it is dark money, because it is secret, because it goes through front groups and into the super PAC and ultimately into the campaign, courts don't know, the public doesn't know, the voters don't know. Everybody else is left out of the joke.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. So bad enough that they are here arguing for excess benefits for themselves compared to regular Americans; worse, they are using dark money corruption to get there. So how is that patriotic?

Mr. BOOKER. I want to answer this question so badly, but the crazy thing is that the person best to answer this question is the person who asked it. You have sat here and given this detailed analysis to show how this group of very wealthy billionaires in this country are so perverting our system by creating these front groups that then interfere in our democracy in the most disgusting ways.

Even if you are like me and you can't stand the decision of Citizens United, even in Citizens United, the majority opinion really projected that we should do the DISCLOSE Act, which we have tried to bring to this floor and get passed, that says no more dark money.

How do we have a political system that is so corrupted by billionaires who so, with all of their money, drown out the voices in politics of other Americans?

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

A great example of that is, they are getting so reckless that many billionaires aren't even hiding it anymore; i.e.

Elon Musk. He is like saying, Hey, I am going to roll up into a Supreme Court case up in one of our best Great Lake States. I am just going to dump \$100 million there and then give away, as if to insult our democracy, million-dollar checks as part of my effort to influence an election with my overwhelming flood-the-zone amount of billions of dollars.

And by the way, hey, it is a pretty good investment, right? Donald Trump is his biggest campaign contributor. As soon he gets elected, a lot of my stock goes up—although, Tesla stock isn't doing so great right now.

The reality is, we live in a country right now that we are giving more and more ability for billionaires to use their wealth to rig the system and then get more wealth as a result of that.

It is so corrupt and so corrupting to this. We have been talking about this, as you said, for 18 hours now—these big, unchecked corporate contributions, billionaire dollars, dark money in front organizations that nobody in the Senate has outlined better than you are corrupting our Constitution.

And even the bad case, Citizens United, even they said this shouldn't have happened. You all should write laws in this place that force people to disclose where this money is coming from. But how many years has it been since Citizens United? Many.

And how many times have we failed? 15. Gosh, I don't know—and I am so grateful for this man because all my colleagues who are assembled here know doggedly and determinately you have stood right there with charts and graphs. You have outlined it ad nauseam. They have attacked you because your truth is so threatening to them that more people will know about how Big Money is corrupting democracy.

So how many assaults are we going to have to watch in 71 days when we now have a President that can create a meme coin? Isn't there something here, my great constitutional scholar, a big word called the called emoluments? This President has basically created a meme coin where we now know—hard to trace this—that millions of dollars have been put into his pocket. I have my team reading about it right now; foreign countries, Russian oligarchs, incredible Arab wealth. You want a payoff to Donald Trump because his government is being run like this?

It is not JFK:

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you do for your country.

You have seen how he has behaved. It is ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for Donald Trump. That is how he does business. How do we know that? Look at the evidence of the last 71 days.

If you are a law firm that comes to him and offers him \$40 million of pro bono work—God how many people I love in Newark had that kind of legal representation, pro bono. He is beating you up, threatening to ruin your business until you come to him and tell him what you are going to do for him.

We are seeing it. You want a merger? You want a merger? What do you do? Give a million dollars to his inaugural committee and then find ways—find ways to get money to him through his meme coin, kowtow to him in any way possible.

Senator WHITEHOUSE, nobody has outlined this more than I have—more than you have, excuse me. I encourage people—I feel like now I am advertising everybody's social media—to go to his YouTube. I call him the YouTube scholar. I am not joking.

You have on YouTube, I know, just great details and outline about how the corruption of money in politics is getting worse and worse and worse in this era of billionaires like Elon Musk who have no shame anymore.

I am going to say it on the Senate floor: There are so many reports and stories of them threatening elected leaders, threatening to put \$100 million in a primary challenge if they don't kowtow to what the great leader is telling them to do.

You use the word all the time, and I am going to say it over and over: This is corrupting to our democracy and amounts to another assault on our Constitution. How much will we take, America, until we say enough, until we say no more, until we say pass the Disclose Act, bring back the dark money. Put light on it. Shine the light of truth on this web of dark money lies. How long will we endure this?

I hope that you and I are in the Senate when you no longer have to give that speech because we took action on the Senate floor to end this nightmare of billionaires trying to outsize influence on our democracy.

Mrs. MURRAY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Not immediately. I want to say to PATTY MURRAY thank you. You were a coconspirator in my life of trying to cause good trouble. You are one of the most powerful people in the U.S. Senate, and you have never lost.

Your compassion and your care for people—you are like somebody else I talked about in the Senate, two of my favorite people who live this ideal that I may be a U.S. Senator, I may be head of Appropriations, I may be President pro tempore of the Senate, but I will never lose my connection to the people I represent and to the convictions that brought me to this place.

You are such an honorable soul; you are such a great American; and you have been such a dear friend to me in this Congress. I savor the times where you let me come to your—a lot more seniority than I—you have got a great hideaway with a view—with a view, one day maybe.

But I just want to say thank you, PATTY MURRAY, for being so kind to me.

Your showing up right now gives me a lot of strength, puts more fuel in my tank. So now—I feel all this power—now, you will outrank me in every

imaginable way here. You are the head of Democratic Appropriations so I am obligated by the State of New Jersey to be very obsequious to you.

I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the Senator from New Jersey. Thank you for your kind words. I would just say the country is so grateful for what you are doing right now because so many people are so frightened, worried, scared, and angry about what is happening to the basic values of this country that so many people have just thought would be there; that their kids would be able to go to school and get an education and not have to worry.

The Department of Education was going to be gone, and there was no watchdog anymore, somebody to help or that the research at NIH was going to be dismantled. Perhaps they had a family member who was in the middle of a—some kind of scientific experiment that is now being dismantled. What happens to them?

I hear from people on so many topics, seniors who are waiting on hold for hours and then getting hung up on because there is nobody to answer the phone anymore. These are basic values that we have as a country that we care for other human beings, and we are there as a country for them.

You are showing that fight today and inspiring so many people. I will ask you a question in a minute, but I wanted to personally thank you for what you are doing today. It is so important. You are the voice of so many people today, and I so appreciate it.

I want to change the dynamic a little bit. I wanted to come today—you have talked about the impact in so many areas of our country. But I wanted to come and ask about something really personal to me. That is the impact of our veterans today.

The Senator may not know this, but when I came to the Senate many years ago, I asked to be on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I was the first woman ever to ask to be on the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The reason for me was very personal. As you may know, my dad was a World War II veteran, and my family relied on his VA care when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, but I also—when I was in college during the Vietnam war—many of my friends and colleagues were on the streets demonstrating, and my heart was out to them.

But I was thinking about those men and women my age who were going over to Vietnam and coming back injured in many different ways. So I actually did my college internship—I asked to be at the Seattle VA. I went to the Seattle VA during the Vietnam war and served on what was the psychiatric ward at the time.

I sat and worked with young men and women who were my age, college age, who had been sent there and came back with severe mental health impacts.

Today we call that PTSD, but at the time, we didn't know it.

I was looking at these men and women who volunteered to go over or sometimes their number came up at the time and came home, and it really impacted the rest of their lives.

I learned firsthand what it means when somebody says: I will go for my country to fight for all of you. So the America you have been talking about—here for you when you get home. Our promise to each and every one of them was if you serve your country in the military, we will take care of you when you get home.

That is a promise I hold near and dear to my heart, which is why I asked to be on the Veterans' Affairs Committee when I first came here. I will tell you, I have seen the impact time and time again. I go home, and I would hold townhalls when I was new here, and there would be a lot of veterans who would come and talk to me and tell me what is going on, what needed to be fixed, but always at that time, I share with my colleagues, women never said anything.

There were a few always in the back of the room. It wasn't until the regular meeting was over and they would come up quietly to me and say: I need to tell you what is happening to woman veterans. I need to share with you sexual assault. I need to share with you that there are no facilities. It is a men-only kind of place. There are no OB/GYNs. There is nobody to do mammographies, and I often don't feel comfortable sitting in that waiting room with a whole lot of people after I have had the experiences that I have had, and there is no place for women to go. So we have worked really hard to make sure the VA works for women.

We worked really hard to make sure the VA addresses the issues of today, the PACT Act that we worked so hard to make sure that men and women who were victims of toxic exposure overseas got the services they need. I could speak for 2 hours here about all the things we have done.

But then I see what this administration is doing to those men and women whom we asked as a country to serve overseas or here at home in service of all of us and the promises we have made them. I think: What are they doing? They are undermining the very value all of us are giving to Americans who serve above and beyond.

So when I hear of 2,000 layoffs a few weeks ago, I go: Wow. Where is that coming from? I know because I am getting the phone calls like I am sure you are from a VA researcher who has been taken off the job and fired, unexplained, told he wasn't doing a good enough job somehow, doing research on basic things like prosthetics or doing basic research on PTSD or doing basic research on the kinds of things that our men and women who served overseas are subjected to and need to come home and have specialized services and resources that they need.

Or I hear from veterans who can't get the services that they have asked for. So now when we are hearing this administration is about to cut 80,000—you didn't hear me wrong—80,000 more people from the VA, a vast majority themselves are veterans, I want to ask the Senator: How does that hit you? How do you feel about that?

Mr. BOOKER. I am so grateful you brought this up—and especially all the work we had to do when I was elected 12, 13 years ago. One of the earliest things I did was meet with women veterans in my State and heard these awful stories about how long it took to get gynecological care, the waits that they had to do, the indignities they had to endure. And I am glad we have made so many strides, in part, thanks to your leadership in New Jersey, with special dedicated facilities to our women veterans, with shortening those wait times, with prioritizing them.

But you are now right. Their proposal is to cut 83,000 positions from the VA. And you know this, you said it, just years ago this governing body passed the PACT Act with overwhelming bipartisan support, signed by President Biden in August of 2022, the largest healthcare benefit expansion in VA history. You were one of the leaders, increasing disability compensation and extending eligibility for VA care.

To meet this increased demand, the VA added 61,000 employees in 2023. These new hires were claim processors, physicians, nursing staff, medical support assistants, food service workers, and housekeeping staff.

And now the progress this body made is in jeopardy by this President. We added 61,000 just to keep up with the demands and the needs. And now he is cutting 83,000.

This is an article if you don't want me to yield: "DAV urges Veteran Affairs to be more transparent about vet care amid layoffs and budget cuts."

Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins says veterans' care won't be impacted . . . which saw the largest expansion of VA healthcare benefits in a generation after the passing of the PACT Act.

Collins attended DAV's recent Mid-Winter Conference, where he came from behind the podium, walked into the audience and told attendees that vet care and benefits would not be impacted by the Trump administration's cuts.

In a recent appearance on the CBS Eye on Veterans podcast, DAV Communications Chief and Air Force veteran Dan Clare said the VA has not demonstrated how it will keep that promise.

They have not demonstrated.

DAV also does not have "a lot of information about what's planned," he said.

Can you imagine that? Leaving all these veterans with insecurity and uncertainty.

"Now, we're hearing about 83,000 people losing their jobs, 20,000 or so of those folks might be veterans," said Clare. "We're very concerned about how we're going to be able to cut that many people and maintain care and benefits."

VA has hired thousands of staffers since 2022 in response to the PACT Act, which

brought nearly 800,000 new enrollees into its system. Collins has said cutting the VA workforce by 83,000 would bring it back down to its 2019 level.

Before we did all of those expansions to help women vets.

Clare said he has not heard about specific performance problems with those who have been laid off . . .

Well, you haven't heard about it.

Veterans' needs have not changed and remain great.

"The people who are sick from the burn pits didn't necessarily get better overnight and some of these folks are going to have a long road to hoe when it comes to their health," he said.

DAV is getting calls frequently from veterans who are "scared, angry and don't understand what's going on and how it's going to affect them," added Clare.

Clare was one of the first whistleblowers on burn pits in Iraq, which eventually inspired the fight to pass the PACT Act, [to help] veterans who became sick, or even died, from their toxic exposures.

"When we started talking about dioxin, when Vietnam veterans heard that, they immediately thought of Agent Orange . . . and that's probably what this is, our generation's Agent Orange."

"There's a lot of decisions being made behind closed doors," he continued. "We want to know what the plan is."

We want to know what the plan is.

"We're not against efficiency [of] government. We're not against even removing VA employees who may not be fit performers."

A veteran has a unique understanding of another veteran's needs, Clare [said.] "When you lose those folks out of the VA system, [the veterans,] you lose an institutional capacity to understand veterans."

It is also unclear how the cuts will impact VA research, which Clare also stressed has helped veterans deal with complex issues that are service-connected, such as traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress.

In addition to being concerned about how recent budget cuts and staff reductions will impact veteran care and caregivers, Clare said DAV is also concerned about the impact on veteran-owned small businesses.

DAV is asking veteran business owners whose contracts have been recently cancelled or who have been fired from their VA jobs to reach out here. DAV is actively keeping a list of veterans negatively affected by the Trump administration's cuts and plans on fighting for them in the weeks and months to come.

And those lists that they are keeping are getting longer and longer and longer, the people affected by this.

So to answer your question, it is absurd; it is offensive; it is ready, fire, aim. Tens of thousands of veterans laid off, veterans who do business and work in contracts, contracts ended. Why is this another group that the President of the United States is scaring? Frightened veterans, angry veterans; I am hearing from them in my State. I know you are hearing from them in yours.

What is the plan? What is the plan? They have no answer for us. All they are doing is cutting Social Security staff, undermining the delivery of those services, cutting the VA services. And why, by the way? Is it creating efficiency or effectiveness? No. Is it to create savings? Because we have to create savings to give more of those tax

cuts to billionaires like Elon Musk. It is not fair; it is not right.

When we send people off into the most dangerous environments on the planet Earth and ask them to put their lives on the line for us, the least we can do as a Nation is not penny-pinch on their backs of the service that they deserve.

Mrs. MURRAY. If the Senator would just yield for one additional question.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator is right. And so many veterans are afraid right now, and I had a veteran tell me that he was one of those people who got the letter, "you haven't performed well." He worked for the National Park Service, actually. And he said: I have been saving lives; I have been cleaning trails; I have been making sure the national parks are safe for all of you.

And then he said to me: I am a veteran. I served in the war, and I served my country there because I wanted to serve my country and my fellow Americans, and I came home and worked for the National Park Service to do the same.

And now as a veteran, my country is not there for me. And I would just say to my colleague and to everyone who is listening, these men and women that we make a promise to, that we say we will be there for you when you come home, that does not mean slamming a door in their face.

It doesn't mean that you have to wait for hours to get the services that you earned. It doesn't mean that you will be mistreated. It means that we will honor you. And I would thank the Senator for his response and just say to him again, do you think we are treating men and women in this country as great Americans by the actions that are being taken by this administration?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you for the question. No. And I am just going to read another article that is going to make even clearer the point that you just laid that is so strong and so important.

This is from Axios. "How White House firings are hurting veterans."

The Trump administration's big cuts to the federal government are hitting one group particularly hard—the country's veterans.

Why it matters: Many of those who've served in the military derive a sense of purpose and belonging from their government work—viewing it as a way to serve their country and help their peers outside of active duty.

The big picture: It's not yet clear yet how many military vets have been fired, or will be. Last year veterans made up 28 percent of the federal workforce—

That's 28 percent—

per federal data—a far bigger share than the 5% in the private sector.

About 36% of the vets working in civil service, more than 200,000 in total, are disabled or have a serious health condition, per federal data.

So 36 percent of the vets working in civil service are disabled vets.

"This is the largest attack on veteran employment in our lifetime," says William Attig, executive director of the Union Veterans Council, a labor group that represents many of these workers.

Attig, who was deployed in Iraq from 2003 to 2009, has been talking to newly unemployed members, trying to get a tally of everyone who's lost a job.

Zoom in: Some veterans, still holding on to their jobs for now, are waiting for the hammer to drop.

"We're being smeared as leeches, but I just want to serve my country and provide for my family," an employee at the Department of Defense who is a disabled veteran, and requested anonymity because he didn't want to put his job further at risk.

Talk about free speech. "We're being smeared as leeches," says a disabled veteran who stood for us.

He was thrilled to land his job just a few months ago, but is anxiously waiting to see if he'll be one of the more than 5,000 workers the Pentagon said it would fire next week.

Privately—

Privately now—

GOP lawmakers are growing uneasy with [the] cuts that impact veterans—

I know this because I know the heart of so many of my Republican colleagues—

Politico reports, adding that vets have been "disproportionately affected" by the firings.

Since, again, GOP lawmakers are growing uneasy about it.

The White House did not say how many veterans have been fired. At least one department, Interior, has reportedly carved out an exception for them.

"President Trump has consistently stood up for our brave men and women in uniform—delivering crucial reforms that improved VA healthcare, decreased Veteran homelessness, and enhanced education benefits," said White House spokesperson Anna Kelly in an email.

There are a few reasons government work attracts vets. The federal government has a "veterans preference"—put simply, when deciding among a group of qualified candidates, they're first in line.

Put simply when deciding among a group of qualified candidates, they are first in line. I think that is right.

"You'd have to jump through a lot of hoops to not hire a veteran," said a former federal official. . . .

With more veterans working in government, more feel welcomed to work among people who understand them. Others are drawn to the retirement benefits—years of military service counts towards your federal pension.

Plus, many of these folks feel drawn to mission-driven employment. "Most veterans feel like they are putting on another uniform [when they go work in other Federal Agencies]."

These jobs are a crucial piece of the puzzle in post-military life, he says, adding that it's also a key part of suicide prevention for this at-risk group.

"One of the most important things you can do for veterans is to find them a job."

How can we expect to maintain what is, in America, an all-volunteer force if we fail to show those folks willing to serve how we care for our servicemembers when they come home?

Slashing more than 83,000 jobs from the VA alone, it is clear that these cuts are going to have a disproportionate

impact on veterans, veteran contractors, and the services they receive. I am angry about these cuts; but most of all, it should make all Americans feel a sense of sadness.

We ask our veterans to sacrifice so much, and we all know, who know veterans, it is not just the veterans, it is also veteran families that make that sacrifice, that share in that service, that share in that commitment.

And these veterans, some of the more talented dedicated leaders I know. They are not doing it for the money; they are doing it because they are called to serve.

Do you know how many people jumped into service after 9/11? Friends of mine rushed to join the military, to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. And now they are home. Many of them with invisible wounds. Many of them with visible wounds.

And the services they rely on for their healthcare, the services they rely on as lifelines, the services they rely on often that give them hope and opportunity, not compounding their trauma, this is now being attacked by our President, who is not keeping his promises. He says he values veterans, but the facts are different.

"She Devoted Her Life to Serving the U.S. Then DOGE Targeted Her."

It had been six days since Joy Marver was locked out of her office at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, five days since she checked herself into a hospital for emergency psychiatric care, and two days since she sent a letter to her supervisors: "Please, I'm so confused. Can you help me understand?"

Now, she followed her wife into the storage room of their house outside Minneapolis, searching for answers no one would give her.

A half-dozen bins held the remnants of 22 years spent in service to the U.S. government—first as a sergeant first class in Iraq, then as a disabled veteran and finally as a V.A. support specialist in logistics.

She had devoted her career to a system that had always made sense to her, but now nobody seemed to know whether she had officially been laid off, or for how long, or why.

"Are you sure you never got an email?" asked her wife, Miki Jo Carlson, 49.

"How would I know?" asked Marver, 45. "They deleted my account."

"Maybe it's because you were still probationary?"

"My boss said I was exempt," Marver said. "I was supposed to be essential."

In the last few months, more than 30,000 people across the country were fired by President Trump's new initiative called the Department of Government Efficiency, a historic reduction of the federal work force that has been all the more disruptive because of its chaotic execution. Entire agency divisions have been cut without explanation or mistakenly fired and then rapidly rehired, resulting in several lawsuits and mass confusion among civil workers. After a court ruled last week that many of the firings were illegal, the government began reinstating workers, even as the Trump administration appealed the decision and promised more layoffs.

The V.A. alone said it planned to cut about 80,000 more jobs this year—including tens of thousands of veterans—and for Marver the shock of losing her job was eclipsed by the disorientation of being repeatedly dismissed

and belittled by the government she served. She had watched on TV as Trump's billionaire adviser Elon Musk took the stage at a political conference wielding a chain saw to the beat of rock music, slicing apart the air with what he called the "chain saw for bureaucracy." She had listened to Trump's aides and allies deride federal employees for being "lazy," "parasitic," "unaccountable" and "essentially wasting" taxpayer money in their "fake jobs."

In Marver's case, that job had meant helping to retrain soldiers for the civilian work force and coordinating veteran burials while earning a salary of \$53,000 a year.

"Here's the note I got a little while after I was hired," Marver told Carlson, pulling a form letter from the government. "You represent the best of who we are as Americans," it read. "You could have chosen to do anything with your talents, but you chose public service."

"Kind of boilerplate, but it is nice," Carlson said.

Mr. BENNET. Senator BOOKER, would you yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Before I yield, I just want to acknowledge my friend in the chair. And she is cracking a tight whip, so I appreciate you following the rules here. I have to read this now. And I am eager to get to your question, because you are one of the few people I knew before I got to the Senate.

Mr. BENNET. That is what I wanted to talk about.

Mr. BOOKER. I didn't yield for a question. I can't say anything, sir. The Parliamentarian will jump all over you. I have the floor.

So much power, it is going to my head.

Mr. BENNET. Sir, will you yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, man. I have known you for like 25 years. I wanted to talk about you, but you are being so insistent, I will reward your insistence and say I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Let me ask you, Senator BOOKER—can I ask you directly how long a question you would like? I am happy to provide you with a 5-minute question or a 5-hour question. It depends entirely on you.

Mr. BOOKER. I actually believe you would do a 5-hour question to try to help me power through. Senator, we have been at this for—

Mr. BENNET. My wife Susan—

Mr. BOOKER. I love you and your wife Susan, but I love your children more.

Mr. BENNET. That is why I came down here.

Mr. BOOKER. Is this a question? I yield for a question while retaining the floor. Let's make it a 7-minute question.

Mr. BENNET. I say this to the Senator of New Jersey and the Presiding Officer: Thank you very much for being here, for enduring this.

When I started here, I was sitting in the chair all the way to the right of where you are today, Senator BOOKER. I can remember the day you walked in to be sworn in. You came through those doors right there. I had a huge

smile on my face because I knew when you were walking through those doors, when you were walking into this Chamber, you would bring with you the kids that you used to work for in Newark, NJ. The reason I knew that was that when you were working for the kids in Newark, NJ, as the mayor of Newark, NJ, I was working for the kids in Denver as the superintendent of Denver Public Schools.

At that time in our country's history, we were engaged in a pretty profound effort to try to make better the schools in our respective communities—not that everything was perfect, but we were trying to drive achievement for the kids in Newark and the kids in Denver, and we talked about it over many years.

And here you walked into this Chamber, a place where it would be easy to imagine has long had the habit of treating America's kids like they are someone else's kids, not like they are America's kids.

I know that because if the kids in America were represented by the 100 desks that are in this Senate, roughly 9 of them would be graduating with a college degree in our country, 9 of these desks.

If we thought about the rates of literacy, the failure in our country to be able to teach people how to read or do mathematics decade after decade after decade, the proficient students would consume just a few desks in this place and everybody else would not be able to do basic levels of reading and basic levels of math.

But here you were, somebody who understands that, and here you are, somebody who understands that.

One of the very first projects you and I worked on—this is coming to my question—was the child tax credit. This was an effort to turn back 30 or 40 years of trickle-down economics that said that what we are going to do is cut taxes for the richest people in the country and just have it trickle down to everybody else. Some people don't know what that means. Let me, if I could—

Mr. BOOKER. Please, please.

Mr. BENNET. Let me just say what that actually means.

For you to understand that what tax policy is, that tax policy that Donald Trump has pursued now twice—once when he was President before and now again—you have to imagine that there is a mayor in Newark or there is a mayor in Denver or a mayor in San Diego or in Miami who is saying to the people that live in his community: I have an idea. I am going to go out and borrow more money than we have ever borrowed before as a community. I am going to go out and borrow a ton of money.

Your constituents and my constituents would say: Wait a minute, Mayor. Wait a minute. That makes me nervous. What are you borrowing all that money for?

Because I am worried about the fiscal condition of my city and my town.

This conversation would happen in every city and every town in Colorado or New Jersey, whether they are Democratic or Republican mayors. You have to answer the question: What are you spending the money on? What are you going to borrow all this money for? Is it for our parks? No. Is it for our schools? No. Is it to give mental health services to kids who desperately need it? No. Is it for our roads and bridges, our infrastructure? No. Are you going to do something important for our water systems? No.

What is the answer? What are you going to do with that money that you are borrowing, that you are mortgaging our kids' future? What is this important thing you are going to do with it?

The answer is, we are going to give it to the two richest neighborhoods in New Jersey or Newark or Denver, and we are going to expect that it is going to trickle down to everybody else.

That is the theory. That is what trickle-down economics is. That is what the Trump tax plan is. And there is a reason why no mayor in America has ever done it—because you would be run out on a rail because you couldn't explain it.

You are going to borrow money from the kids of our police officers, our firefighters, our teachers in order to cut taxes for the richest people in the community in the hope that they will buy a little bit of an extra—I don't know—luxury, and then that is going to somehow generate economic activity for everybody else. It is demonstrably true that has never worked.

By the way, these tax cuts, I say to the Presiding Officer and everybody else within the sound of my voice, have literally never ever come close to paying for themselves. That is a complete lie. That is why the Congressional Budget Office says this is going to blow a \$4.6 trillion hole in our deficit. And for what? To give tax cuts to the richest people in America when they need them least and when the income inequality is as great as it has been in our country since the 1920s? Which brings me to my question.

My cherished colleague from New Jersey, what was it we were trying to do with the child tax credit? There were a lot of people who believed that we couldn't even get it passed, that we couldn't even get the IRS to administer it. Then we did get it passed during part of the Biden administration, and lo and behold, more than 90 percent of the families in New Jersey got a tax cut. Lo and behold, more than 90 percent of the families in Colorado got a tax cut—not waiting for a trickle down from the wealthiest people, but they got a tax cut directly that did what? Cut in half—cut in half—the childhood poverty rate in America.

In the richest country in the world, for one moment, we said we don't have to accept this level of childhood poverty as a permanent feature of our democracy or a permanent feature of our

economy. We can do something different than that.

Senator BOOKER, that is what you said when you were mayor of Newark. We don't have to accept these generational outcomes of poverty or of poor schools or of lead in water. We can do something different. And that is what you brought to the U.S. Senate as well.

The tragedy, from my perspective, is—there are many tragedies about the election of Donald Trump—by the way, I will say again on this floor that I don't blame him for getting elected President. He ran, and he won. Those of us that were trying to offer a different vision have something to explain about why we were not successful.

But one thing I am certain of is that the kids in Newark and the kids in Denver are completely invisible to our current President, that he is not concerned with their welfare or even loses a minute's sleep over the next generation.

So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about—this isn't a numbers and cents question because I know—even though you don't look tired, I am sure you must be tired after all these hours and hours and hours. But can you talk a little bit, Senator, about how a society should be judged with respect to how we treat the next generation of Americans; how a tax bill should be judged by how we treat the next generation of Americans; how almost nothing else matters except what we do with respect to the next generation of Americans?

I can tell you that my daughters Caroline, Halina, and Anne understand better than most your commitment to them and your commitment to their generation because you have been such an inspiration to them, not just today—not just today but thank you for what you are doing—but for basically their entire lifetime.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you for the question, my long, longtime friend, one of the folks I have known the longest whom I get to serve with.

What you did for me when I came here—It was you and Sherrod Brown who sat right there by the door. You let Bennet and Brown become Bennet, Brown, Booker—three B's. We joined together with some of the most extraordinary House Members and Brother Warnock to fight for the child tax credit.

It took years, but we found our opening when we called Ron Klain together before the election was even settled and said: Please, the best thing our country can do is to expand the child tax credit and make it fully refundable. Because we knew, as you said, it would give the overwhelming majority—between 80 and 93 percent depending on what State you are—of people in those States a—when you expand the earned income tax credit, it would give them a tax break.

It was arguably one of the greatest tax cuts in the last 50 years. It cut child poverty in America nearly in

half. And child poverty is a moral obscenity. Child poverty is violence against children—violence.

Here is the thing that you and I both know from the research: Every dollar you spend in raising a child above the poverty line, you return to society between \$5 and \$7 in economic growth and activity or in lesser costs because kids above the child poverty line have, for example, less visits to the emergency room.

I just don't understand how we are a nation—again, the wealthiest Nation—that has one of the highest child poverty rates. It makes no sense, zero sense, when we proved once and for all with that 1-year effort—because we couldn't make it permanent; we were short one vote in this body—we proved forever in America that child poverty is a policy choice, not an inevitable reality.

So you asked a great question. Why, in a nation that was founded by men that studied virtue, the ideals of virtue—they were imperfect geniuses. They were imperfect geniuses, but they really struggled with moral philosophy.

We have the power—we have proven it—to cut child poverty in half. What is the argument against it? Wasteful spending? Come on. Come on. Giving trillions of dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest in America—I am sorry, it is wasteful spending, especially if it ends up blowing a hole. Those tax cuts don't pay for themselves. Trump 1 tax cuts didn't, and renewing them won't. Doing the same thing over and over again and thinking you will get different results is the very definition of "insanity."

You are one of the most passionate—I remember a spellbinder of a speech you gave in this body. You were so angry.

I love it when Bennet is unchained. You were so angry when you started talking about the horrible policies of this Nation that have eaten away the inheritance of children to come. You went off on the trillions of dollars spent on stupid foreign wars, where our brave men and women fought for this country, but this country made bad mistakes in these long wars. You talked about the money we spent there. And you talked about the first time in American history—common sacrifice every war before that, not just the men and women who were brave enough to go out and fight—you said the first time in American history that we said: The only people that are going to bear a burden are the people that are going to go. The rest of you get tax cuts.

George Bush—first time ever we went to war and gave tax cuts. From the Civil War, to the Revolutionary War, to World War I, to World War II, it was a common collective effort. My grandmother talked with pride about victory gardens and with pride about war bonds. Everybody pitched in.

Here we are at another crossroads. Is America going to tolerate this idea

that we are going to give extraordinary tax cuts that overwhelmingly, disproportionately will accrue to the wealthiest amongst us? For what?

If I were a mayor, I would have to answer that. So I appreciate your question, but I also appreciate your moral indignation. I really do. I keep saying over and over again, in elevating the voices of Americans on this floor, in elevating the point, I hope, that we can't keep doing things like this as business as usual. These are real issues, not of right or left or of right or wrong. It is a moral moment in America, and you point out a very clear choice we have: When we talk about our tax policy, it should reflect our values.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. REED. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. For JACK REED, I would do just about anything. So I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. REED. First, thank you for continuing to highlight the harm that is being done by the Trump administration and that it is inflicting on working Americans: flouting the law, withholding Federal funds, illegally shuttering Federal Agencies, ruining longstanding alliances, increasing prices and taxes on American consumers. It goes on and on and on.

Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would fire 20,000 employees. Those cuts appear to be taking shape right now. Is the Senator aware that there are reports that thousands of HHS staff have been locked out of their offices this morning?

Mr. BOOKER. To answer the Senator's question, I have been on the floor since last night. So I haven't read any news reports. But when you ask if I am aware of thousands and thousands of HHS employees who have been laid off of their jobs, I am not aware of it, but I am not surprised. The question isn't, Is Donald Trump going to lay more people off? The question isn't, Is Donald Trump going to lay, more disproportionately, veterans off? The question is, What are we going to do to stop it when it isn't thoughtful, reasonable cuts?

He talks about the people he is cutting as leaches and demeans and degrades their commitment to service and their noble obligations.

We were told that HHS would be about making America healthy again, and I haven't seen that. I have seen them cut services that give children access to fresh and healthy foods. I have seen them cut regulations on polluters that make our air quality worse, which hurts people with emphysema, with asthma, and with other respiratory diseases. In fact, a lot of the actuarials show that more Americans die when polluters are allowed to go back to polluting more. I can go through the things they are doing that are not making our water healthier or safer, that are not making our air

healthier or safer, not making more access to access healthcare that stops and treats chronic disease, and not giving access to healthy food. We are not making America healthy anymore.

So these cuts don't surprise me, but they hurt me. They hurt me. These are Americans. They are disproportionately veterans. I thank you for speaking up for them today.

Mr. REED. If the Senator would yield for another question.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. REED. President Trump and the Secretary of HHS, Secretary Kennedy, are, as I indicated and made you aware, firing a host of people today, but the critical staff functions will be undercut—for example, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which focuses on worker safety.

LIHEAP, as you know, provides essential support to literally keep people warm in the winter and cool in the summer in our Southern States. With LIHEAP undercut like that, there will be effects. People will become unhealthy. In fact, they probably could even pass away.

NIOSH, on the other hand, is an Agency that looks after 164 million people in this country so they are safe.

We all know—we all remember back—all of those stories about the Gilded Age, which sometimes, I think, the administration wants to bring back, where children labored in shops, where garment workers were killed in fires because there was no way to get out, as all the exits were sealed. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health prevents that.

Work-related injuries and illnesses cost our economy \$250 billion annually. So that will double, triple, quadruple.

We are seeing all sorts of reports about the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC. They do critical work, and they are under the gun.

We are seeing reports that the Director of the FDA Center for Tobacco Products has been fired. We can see that President Trump and Secretary Kennedy would rather stand up for Big Tobacco than for young kids who get hooked on it, and it ruins their health.

These are just a few of the cuts, and I know you are aware of them. I know you are focused on these. They are going to destroy years of progress, and, basically, it is being shouldered by working Americans. Nobody who lives in Mar-a-Lago needs LIHEAP heating. Nobody who dines at Mar-a-Lago needs Occupational Safety and Health deployed, but the waiters do, and the grounds people do.

So, Senator, what are your thoughts about it?

Mr. BOOKER. I so appreciate the question from my friend.

I really think that he is a superpower, and you are a Superman in that character because you are thinking about the people affected.

We throw these acronyms down here, and they sound like government programs, but then you meet with people. I remember when I was starting out in my political career in service in Newark, and I had this dear friend named Kim. She was one of these people who worked at trying to sign people up for LIHEAP. The stories would affect her of the people for whom that was a lifeline for them to have a little bit of resources—a little bit of resources—to help them get their energy costs in place where they could afford heat in the winter and some air in the summer. There are stories of elders and the vulnerable.

I don't understand how we can be a nation with so much wealth and abundance, and we haven't figured out a way to design a system where, when you invest in the well-being of people, people thrive, where kids are growing up in quality housing, with great public schools, with clean air, without lead in their water, and above the poverty line.

Do you know what I love about young people in this country? It is their resiliency. I meet these beautiful children with light in their eyes, and all they need is a little fertile ground, and they go beyond our imagination in what they can achieve.

So here we are taking our national treasure. The resources being paid into our taxes are our national treasure. And what do we invest in? What do we do with it? Well, we are running up more debt. We are not going to pay for these tax cuts that are overwhelmingly going to go to the wealthiest, but we are taking all of these things that people rely on from our veterans to our seniors, to our disabled, to our expectant moms. We are just taking as much as we can to defer as much of these gross tax cuts that go disproportionately to the wealthy.

So, again, I return to where I have been for closing in on 19 hours. I go back to: What are we going to do about it? It can't be business as usual. There are too many things we have already covered that show that this is a moral moment in America. Where do we stand?

As John Lewis said and as I keep repeating—he says it is time to get into good trouble, necessary trouble, to redeem the soul of our Nation, and what you are talking about goes directly to the soul, what we stand for. Whom do we stand for? We should stand for each other.

Thank you, sir.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, will the Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. To my dear friend, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

I thank you for being here. I thank you for your leadership. I thank you for what you stand for. I look forward to your question.

Ms. CANTWELL. I so appreciate the Senator from New Jersey trying to articulate the urgency of this moment.

I know you have discussed many things over the last I don't know how many hours it is, but it has been many, many hours. You know we just had a hearing this morning related to the markup of the Social Security nominee, and somebody—we are just trying to find out—who is a whistleblower said he was involved in helping DOGE.

We are here today, trying to bring attention to the American public that people are trying to rearrange essential services and contractual obligations—things like Social Security or Medicaid or even Medicare—by basically saying “Well, we have this efficiency strategy” when in reality they are over there with numbers just trying to carve something out of the budget—billions of dollars out of Social Security efficiency or billions and billions and billions of dollars out of Medicaid, which would really come right out of our hospitals, which are saying they don't even think they can stay open.

But this notion of Social Security—I don't know if you have heard that not only are they closing offices and cutting jobs, but they are asking people to reregister.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. CANTWELL. So my constituent, who they basically said was dead, was not dead. He wanted his Social Security. So not only did they not give him his check in January, they tried to claw back checks from the previous months out of his bank account.

Even though this has gotten national press and attention, you would think that everybody on the other side would be like “No, that is not what we are trying to do” even though the President in the State of the Union said all of these people were getting Social Security checks when my constituent is standing in line with less and less staff, trying to get his Social Security. And guess what. They are still at it. As of last Friday, they were still not giving him his Social Security.

So what are we unleashing on America? What are we unleashing that even—and I don't know whether you addressed these Social Security issues in your statements. I so appreciate you emphasizing the urgency here because this is the dismantling of contractual agreements between the American people and the people's body. We are here to represent them and stand up for it, and people are acting like they don't care.

So you are here in an extraordinary athletic achievement. Thank you. It makes your Stanford days look like nothing, right? You have achieved this great, long effort to bring illumination to the American people that they are getting screwed over the fact that these cuts are not some efficient way to deliver better service. In Social Security, they are undermining Social Security.

So have you heard of these cases, the whistleblower issue and others, and do you believe that is what we should be paying attention to and that before we

get a vote on Mr. Bisignano, we should be finding out what whistleblowers are saying and about his involvement relating to DOGE and making sure that Social Security checks are protected?

Mr. BOOKER. I thank you for the question, my friend and my chairwoman.

I did talk about this, but it is so worth repeating. At some point in the night, we covered Social Security, and we read story after story after story of senior citizens who are frightened and afraid that the President of the United States will stand at the joint address and attack Social Security and make fun of it with lie after lie after lie about millions and millions of people getting fraudulent checks when the people who do the fact-checking and even the Social Security folks themselves say that it is a minuscule number of people getting checks and usually it is an overpayment.

But they didn't stop there. Elon Musk called it a Ponzi scheme. The richest man in the world and the most powerful man in the world—himself a billionaire—are attacking the program that millions and millions of our senior citizens rely on.

I read letters from people who said: Don't forget about the mental or disabled who rely on SSI. They were begging us to remember and speak their names and tell their stories.

There is a lot of fear, a lot of terror, a lot of insecurity.

We spoke about this on the floor, that the benefits are already being cut. What do I mean by that? Well, if you are cutting Social Security offices—as one of our colleagues said from New Hampshire—in a rural area, you are forcing people to have to drive 100 miles if they have a problem. They can't talk on the phone because the wait times on the phone—I read an article in the Wall Street Journal, which is no leftwing mag. It was talking about how the customer service is going downhill because of the cuts they are making, and now you are forcing seniors—we read letters from 85-year-olds, 90-year-olds, 93-year-olds. They are going to drive 100 miles?

I read letters from Social Security workers who now work in inadequate spaces, with inadequate staff, unable to do the job they love. They are not leeches. They are not people who should be demeaned or degraded by the most powerful people in our land. They are public servants who love their jobs and want to serve seniors but now can't do it because they cut, cut, cut before they thought, thought, thought.

Ms. CANTWELL. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. CANTWELL. I thank the Senator from New Jersey. The issue that I think is not being illuminated enough is the sheer numbers here.

In my State of Washington, 1.4 million people are on Social Security and 1.8 million people are on Medicaid. So

you are talking about a big Federal relationship.

You know, I actually worked in the private sector. I can tell you one thing about the private sector: The bigger it gets, usually the more inefficient it gets. It just happens. Big organizations can be inefficient.

So just because the Federal Government is the government doesn't mean that Social Security and Medicaid are fraught with fraud. In this case, my constituent is not even getting his check, and no one is responding. You would think that with all this commotion, that Social Security would want to jump right on it and fix it, but they are not.

The question I have for the Senator from New Jersey is, in my State, I have, as I said, nearly 1.8 million people who are on Medicaid, and the same problem is now where our colleagues are trying to say they are going to get \$880 billion out of the Energy and Commerce budget of the House of Representatives when in reality like 90 percent of that money is Medicare or Medicaid. If Medicare is supposedly off the table, then the majority of that is going to come from Medicaid.

So in my State, I am hearing from hospitals that that means they could close. That means essential Medicaid services that are used even in our jails or for fentanyl treatment or Medicaid that is used as an ObamaCare expansion for healthcare that so many literally red Republican States, Republican Governors have said: We want that.

The Governor of Idaho: Yes, we want that.

That is an expansion of Medicaid, and it is successfully working at providing healthcare to millions of Americans.

But now our colleagues are entertaining a notion that they could cut this system. They are not really making it clear, so, again, the illumination of you showing the urgency is like a big flag that we are trying to show to the American people: This is not a drill. This is now. This is happening. The beginnings of it are happening.

Now this debate that is going to ensue is going to be a massive cut into the programs unless the American people wake up.

Now, in your State, are you hearing in New Jersey about the Medicaid cuts, the impacts on hospitals, on the delivery system, on essential services?

Mr. BOOKER. I cannot emphasize to you strongly enough, we decided to start this whole thing at 7 p.m. last night with Medicaid. We read story after story after story after story of people who are Medicaid beneficiaries who are terrified, who are afraid. If they cut \$880 billion, if they diminish the cuts in any way to their services—they are holding together their lives in this fragile financial equilibrium, and one little tug of a transportation service, one little tug of a home healthcare giver, and it all crumbles. They are terrified and afraid.

Some Americans are dealing with the greatest challenges—not of their own making. Some of them are working full-time jobs, and getting an injury causes an extraordinary amount of chaos to their lives.

So, yes, I read from the people who are recipients. I read from the people who run hospitals—from rural hospitals, to urban hospitals, to level I trauma centers—who all said that if they cut hundreds of billions of dollars, it will affect them.

I did something really important. I read from Republican Governors and Democratic Governors because I keep saying over and over: America, this is not right or left. It is right or wrong. It is not a partisan moment. It is an American moment. It is a moral moment.

I read voices from Republicans specifically, Republican Governors in Medicaid expansion States. They have this trigger—you know this—many States, that when the funding from the Federal Government dips below 90 percent, boom, Medicaid expansion is over and millions of people are in financial crisis, in healthcare crisis.

What is it going to take for us to say no with such a firm voice, such a chorus of conviction, thousands, hundreds of thousands of Americans, red, white, and blue, every State, saying: Do not do this for no good reason but to give the majority of your tax cuts to billionaires like Elon Musk. It makes no sense.

Who are we as a country? These are not normal times. This is not usual. We should be standing up because I read the stories of Republicans who run hospitals, Republicans who are Governors, who all are saying: Don't do this. Don't do this.

Mr. PADILLA. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Senator PADILLA, I was teasing. I am not yielding yet, Senator PADILLA. I was teasing that man over there named BENNET. He and I have known each other for years, but you and I have known each other for longer. I knew the Senator from Washington before I got here—mutual friends. So these are three people who were friends of mine before we met in this institution. If I had COONS here, I would have all four.

You, though, I knew you longer than BENNET, longer than the great Senator from Washington, and the chairwoman. We met in 1998, 1999, around then. We were both city council people. And a dear friend, the beautiful man who introduced us, told me before we walked into your office that you were a rising star, that you were a man of deep decency; that you were going to do extraordinary things in your career, and he didn't overstate the fact.

You are one of my close friends, and I definitely yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. PADILLA. Let the RECORD reflect that he said the exact same things—probably better things about you, and he was absolutely correct.

But I couldn't help but interject right at the moment where I did because, once again, your passion is coming through.

First of all, I tremendously admire what you have been doing here on the floor of the Senate today, starting with last night. As I have been watching off and on, there have been moments where your empathy and your sympathy and your care and concern are coming through. You can't help it. It is who you are.

There have been other moments, as you have been talking about some of the key issues and dynamics of this current political climate that we are in, where your passion is coming through and, at times, anger.

I know it because I have seen it. I know it because we get calls in my office about this. I know it because if you monitor comments and commentary on social media about what my colleague is doing here on the Senate floor, some people have asked: Why is he so angry?

Well, I would like to say here right now that Senator BOOKER has every right to be angry because of what is going on. I know I am angry with so much of what is going on. And the American people have every right to be angry with what is going on because none of what we are seeing come out of the Trump White House is normal.

But every day, this approach of flooding the zone with more and more extreme actions runs the risk of making people grow numb to these attacks, and we certainly can't surrender to the feeling of just being overwhelmed by their tactics.

So I want to thank the senior Senator from New Jersey for doing what he is doing to shake and awaken the conscience of our country.

As I was listening to my colleague talk about the real dangers of the Trump administration, what it poses for our Nation, I also reflect on what it means for our environment because I know it hits home for many folks but especially in my home State of California.

California—many of you have come to visit time and again—is home to some of the most beautiful parks and natural wonders in the Nation, but if you grow up in Southern California, like I did, you also know there is a flip side to this climate discussion. We are seeing—we live through the real cost of climate inaction.

Growing up, I can tell you not just about the smell of diesel exhaust, which I will never forget, sitting in a schoolbus going to and from school, but the regular days where school would be shut down early and we would all be sent home because of the smog—toxic smog—in the air in the greater Southern California area. These were concrete reminders of the real threats emissions pose to our health.

California also knows the dangers posed by extreme weather. We know the droughts, we know the floods, and, yes, all too often, we have come to

know wildfires, devastating wildfires like the ones we experienced in Los Angeles County at the beginning of this year.

Senator BOOKER was kind enough to come visit a few weeks ago to tour Altadena—the epicenter, if you will, of the Eaton fire that devastated so many. I think we both agreed and anybody who has visited the area to see for themselves would agree you cannot see what happened in and around Altadena and come away unmoved.

I could go on and on with examples and reasons to say to you that this is exactly why California for decades has worked so hard against pollution and against the impacts of climate change, everything from being aggressive on tailpipe emission standards to our ambitious conservation goals.

The 30x30 goal set up by the Biden administration was modeled after the 30x30 goal set up by the State of California. California is also home to the very first Earth Day, which is now celebrated nationally each and every year.

But, today, much of our progress is now at risk because just in the first 2 months of the second Trump administration, we have seen nothing but attacks on this progress of environmental protection.

The Trump administration has sought to reverse the endangerment finding, which is the most basic finding of climate science—that, yes, greenhouse gases harm public health. They have taken the steps of illegally freezing funding that this Congress—this Congress—had previously appropriated. I am talking about the types of investments that keep our kids and our communities healthy.

Earlier this month, the EPA—Trump's EPA—announced that they would be rolling back more than 30 environmental rules. By doing so, they are not just going to make Americans less healthy; they are also going to hurt our economy, and it is going to clear the way for China to become the world leader in green technology. So much for "America First" if they continue down that road.

Even while the Trump administration has refused to fight climate change—it is one thing to not be helpful, but they have actually taken a number of steps that are actually harmful and hurtful, that make it harder, for example, for States to respond to natural disasters.

They have toyed with tying wildfire disaster assistance to political demands. They have proposed eliminating FEMA. They have implemented Federal freezes on things like hazardous fuel removal and the hiring of Federal firefighters—things that we need to do in the winter months to prepare for the hot and dry summer months when the risk is greatest.

They have even brazenly opened up dams and flooded portions of the Central Valley to pretend President Trump was helping with the Los Angeles

wildfires when the fact is, those fires were contained when they released this water—water that is no longer available in the hot, dry summer months. So they are not just refusing to act or to help; they are making matters worse for States like California and many others.

That is what this fight is about. Our fight for the environments is about America's health and safety, it is about American jobs, and it is about America's future.

With all of that being said, my question to Senator BOOKER is this: For the next generation of Americans, for the young people who are tuning in and wondering "Well, what is it that I can do? Do I have a voice? Do I have any power?" what would you say to them? How can they take action?

Mr. BOOKER. I love you for that question, my friend. And I just want to talk about anger because I have been all over the place. I read these letters, and they make me sad. I read these letters, and they make me angry. I read these letters, and they make me embarrassed that we are a country where people have to rent their pride and beg for help because of the little, teeny modicum of support they get from a service like Medicaid.

But I have been saying over and over again—as I have tried to learn from my elders, as I have tried to learn from the heroes I revere—that I learned from my parents anger is not a bad emotion. It is what you do with that emotion that is important.

Does it consume you? Does it drive you to hate other people or do you allow it to fuel you? Because it was ferocious love that had ancestors of all of ours in this country make it through insults—no Irish need apply; the injuries of Japanese internments. It is what do you do with those feelings. You are not defined by what happens to you; you are defined by how you choose to respond.

So I tell people, anger—if you are not angry, if you are not angry—let that fuel you.

Well, what about the heartbreak that I feel? Well, I get emotional sometimes because I read a letter and something in it makes me remember somebody I know or to feel the hurt of constituents begging for help, and it breaks my heart.

But I tell you, if America hasn't broken your heart, you don't love her enough because there is so much heartbreak and fear and pain in a nation where people are seeing their economic hopes and dreams of maybe buying a home or having the money to help their kids with school or to meet their basic needs—where so many Americans are one flat tire, one \$400 hit, and they are suddenly doing payday loans or having to struggle to find a way through. There is so much heartbreak in this country.

Great love means you make yourself vulnerable to having that heartbreak. But the heart is a powerful tool that, even when it is broken, it still beats.

What about people who are afraid? I get afraid sometimes. I think about this legislation: If it goes through, what is going to happen in my State? I know the hospitals. I know the recipients.

But you are telling me: Look at our history. Is there anybody in American history that you revere that didn't face extraordinary fear, because you cannot have great courage without great fear. Fear is a necessary precondition to courage. And so you ask me, my friend, what can people do?

I want to remind people, as I have said before on this floor, to remember the truth that I heard before I came here: that change does not come from Washington; it comes to Washington by the people who demand it.

I said this earlier: Do you think that we got suffrage in this country because a bunch of men on this Senate floor right here put their hands in and said: Hey, fellas, on the count of three, women get the right to vote. Ready? One, two, three, go.

No. That is not how it happened. It happened because of Alice Paul. She was a young, young person from New Jersey. She broke with the course of human events. Alice Paul—one of my greatest heroes—you know what she did? She caused a heck of a lot of good trouble, necessary trouble.

She is the first American ever—young American, in her early twenties—the first American ever to protest in front of the White House. She broke with the older, more mature suffrage organizations and went to the White House and did what she called a silent protest. She held up signs quoting President Woodrow Wilson's own words about freedom and equality saying: Aren't they true for me? Like a great Black woman would later say: Ain't I a woman? Don't I deserve rights?

You don't think she was afraid? Let me tell you how afraid she was. Hundreds came out to jeer her, blocking the street, and then they arrested her for obstructing public passage.

And then what do you do with a strong, powerful woman? You say that she is crazy, and you throw her in an insane asylum, before Gandhi. Sitting in jail before Gandhi. Alice Paul, this young American from New Jersey, goes on a hunger strike.

And they don't honor her hunger strike. They shove tubes down her throat, crack eggs into the tube, force-feeding her.

And thank God for the First Amendment, which is under attack here in America; the freedom of the press, under attack here in America. Look at the dragging of the journalist, Jeffrey Goldberg, right now for doing what? Getting the highest security officials in the land, just showing them the laws that they were breaking.

A journalist covered what Alice Paul did. She gets out of jail because of public outrage. She goes back to protesting in front of the White House,

and Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States, finally comes out and joins her in supporting suffrage.

You don't think she was afraid, angry, heartbroken? But she did something different. She chose a new and unusual pathway to show that this is not the America I believe in.

The poetry of Langston Hughes:

America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!

The poetry of Langston Hughes:

There's a dream in the land
With its back against the wall.
To save the dream for one,
It must be saved for ALL.

It is what you do with those emotions that matters. Does it call you to greater service? Does it call you to greater sacrifice? Does it call you to greater love?

And let me say one more thing. As you were speaking, I just wanted to bring this up. You know I love history. And this is one of my favorite letters, ALEX, my colleague Senator PADILLA.

It is one of my favorite letters in all of American history because an obscure, unknown American—obscure and unknown, would never have been known—writes a letter to a powerful, powerful man. This obscure American woman that nobody knows or would have heard of ever, if somebody didn't hear about her story and write a book—she would be gone, like most of the great heroes in American history that we don't know their names.

It reminded me of the last healthcare debate when Donald Trump tried to take away the ACA and how many amazing, heroic people who I don't remember their names but rose up and said: No, no, no.

They got three of my colleagues—McCain, MURKOWSKI, and COLLINS—to change their vote on this floor and stop healthcare from being stripped away from 20 million Americans.

Well, here is what I mean. It is not the powerful people with titles and celebrity and offices and billions of dollars that have ever shaped this country. What shapes this Nation is hard-working, determined Americans who say: I am going to redeem the dream of America. I am going to heal the soul of this country. I am going to demand that we do better, that we rise higher, that we make change happen.

What can you do, that you ask, if you are a young person?

I love this letter. It is written by Frederick Douglass to an unknown person that would have never been heard of if it wasn't for this book. And he writes to his friend:

I am glad to know that the story of your eventful life has been written by a kind lady, and that the same is soon to be published. You ask for what you do not need—

Frederick Douglass writes—when you call upon me for a word of commendation. I need such words from you far more than you can need them from me—

He says to this unknown woman—especially where your superior labors and devotion to the cause of the lately enslaved of our land are known as I know them.

The difference between us is very marked—

Said the great Frederick Douglass, one of the most known people. He was the most photographed man, period, in the 1800s.

Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day—you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scarred, and foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt, "God bless you," has been your only reward.

The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism. Excepting John Brown—of sacred memory—I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people than you have. Much that you have done would seem improbable to those who do not know you as I know you. It is to me a great pleasure and a great privilege to bear testimony for your character and your works, and to say to those to whom you may come, that I regard you in every way truthful and trustworthy.

He gave his legitimacy to this book project, Frederick Douglass, to then an unknown woman who did the most heroic things. Her name was Harriet Tubman.

How did we get here, America, to this privileged place? Well, we got here because of that incredible infrastructure project that this place didn't fund called the Underground Railroad, where Black Americans and White Americans broke laws, did civil disobedience to stop slavery.

How did we get here? We got here because young 20-somethings got up on a bridge named for a grand wizard of the KKK, named the "Edmund Pettus Bridge." We got here because they marched. We got here because they were beaten. We got here because they bled.

And I may know one or the two of the people on that bridge. I may know one or two of their names. But I am in this body because of them.

How did we get here, America? We got here because of people whose names I don't know who fought at Seneca Falls.

How did we get here? We got here because of people whose names I don't know who stood at Stonewall. We got here because of people's names I don't know who were there at Selma.

This is the answer to your question. This is an American moral moment. This is a question of where do we stand for healthcare? where do we stand for Social Security? where do we stand for VA benefits? where do we stand for our American neighbor when the call and commandment of every faith in our land is to love your neighbor?

What is the quality of our love, America? Now is the time to get angry, but let that anger fuel you. Now is your time to get scared for what is happening to your neighbors, and let that fear bring about your courage.

Now is your time to stare at despair and say: You will not have the last word because I am going to stand up, and at least I can give one person hope in this country. Can I give one person hope in this country?

So what do I want from my fellow Americans? Do better than me. Do better than we, in this body. We are flawed and failed people.

I see people showing up at our town-halls, yelling at us, Democrat and Republican: Do more. How are you letting this happen?

Well, I hate to tell you, we are doing all that I can think of. This is why I am standing here trying to give voice to those people. But what is more needed from now is less people sitting on the sidelines, less people being witnesses of American history and more people determined to make it, to make history, to call to the conscience of this Nation, to say: I will not stand for another American to lose their healthcare for a billionaire. I will not stand for another veteran who is dedicated to stopping the suicide of other veterans to lose their job. I won't stand for the air quality in my community to be made worse because they are letting polluters pollute more. I won't stand for the collective assaults on the Constitution by a man who even the highest Judge in our land, a Republican-appointed Judge, said: Stop threatening and bullying other branches of government.

When is it going to be enough? My voice is inadequate. My efforts today are inadequate to stop what they are trying to do.

But we the people are powerful. We are strong. We have changed history. We have bent the arc of the moral universe, and now is that moral moment again. It is the moral moment again.

God bless America. We need you now. God bless America. If you love her, if you love your neighbor, if you love this country, show your love. Stop them from doing what they are trying to do.

And for almost 20 hours we have laid out what they are trying to do—20 hours. I want to stand more, and I will, but I am begging people: Don't let this be another normal day in America. Please, God—please, God—don't let them take Medicaid away from 10, 20, 30, or 40 million Americans who desperately need it. Don't let them do it.

Mr. KING. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield to my dear friend whom I owe an apology. The last hours of your birthday, as I was preparing for this, I realize we have a special bond. Before I yield, I want to tell this guy—

Mr. KING. The Senator was discussing—

Mr. BOOKER. Hold on. I yield, but I retain the right to the floor. So I yield, but I retain the right to the floor.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield, but I retain the right to the floor.

Mr. KING. I want to ask you questions about veterans in this country,

but before I do, you talk a lot about courage.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, sir.

Mr. KING. And how the world has been changed by people of courage, and I look down at my tie that I have on today, which has the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and we think of that as a sacred document, an important document, in our history. But these people had the courage to put their lives on the line for a radical idea that people could govern themselves, that we could be independent of a monarchy, and they were putting their lives on the line.

That is courage, and I am afraid we have people around here, Senator, who won't put their jobs on the line for the idea of America, for our Constitution, for the guarantees that are provided in the Constitution, for the First Amendment, for the structure of the Constitution, for the independence and separation of powers, which is what provides the protection, the essential protection, for our freedoms.

But let me ask a question about veterans. We had a hearing this morning in the Veterans' Affairs Committee. We were hearing nominees, and I commented that here we are, mostly voting on nominees in this extraordinary historic time as if everything is normal.

What I said in the committee this morning was we are playing "Nearer My God" on the deck of the Titanic, and we are talking about all these nominees and all these votes that we are having and not talking about what is happening to our country.

In terms of veterans, here is what is happening. No. 1, every time the guy with the chain saw takes so much pleasure in firing people, if you hear about 1,000 people fired in this government, chances are over 300 of them are veterans. Thirty-percent of the Federal workforce is veterans. In the VA, I suspect it is an even higher number.

So what is happening in the Veterans' Administration? The first thing that happened was a hiring freeze, and the hiring freeze affected everybody in the Veterans' Administration until somebody said: Well, wait a minute, what about doctors and nurses? What about direct care workers? And they said: Oh, wait a minute, we didn't mean for that.

That is sort of symbolic of the way this thing is going because they are not thinking. It is ready, fire, aim, time after time. So you have a hiring freeze. Then they say: Wait a minute, there is this group we want to do, but then they leave the hiring freeze in place for the people that are working behind the scenes.

I think the Senator will agree that if nobody is there to answer the phone when a veteran calls to make a claim or make an appointment, that is a denial of benefits just as if they cut the benefits.

OK. So 2,400 people fired—and by the way, those people being fired are getting emails that say you are being fired

for poor performance. There was no analysis of performance. There was no examination of how they were actually doing or whether these people were contributing. It was random. It was people who were on probation. Do you know why? Because they are easier to fire under our laws.

So we have got people being fired, ostensibly, for poor performance. Think of that as somebody who has put their life on the line for their country because they are a veteran, and then they go to work in public service for the Veterans' Administration, and they are being told poor performance when everybody knows that is a sham.

So the next thing that happens is the Veterans' Administration announces they are going to fire 83,000 people over the next 6 months. Now, they say we are going to return to the size of the Veterans' Administration it was in 2019. No. 1, that is an arbitrary number. Why not 2020 or 2016? You know, it is an arbitrary number. It is not based on any analysis or deep thought.

Here is the problem, Senator. I want you to be ready to respond to this. Here is the problem: There have been seven major pieces of legislation benefiting veterans since 2019, the biggest of which, of course, is the PACT Act, the largest expansion of a veterans' benefit program in probably the last 30 or 40 years, and you need people to administer that program. And instead, they are firing people.

The Secretary of the Veterans' Administration says: Don't worry. It is not going to affect services at all. I don't think that statement passes the straight-face test.

Then we have a statement from the VA that says: We have very proudly—we have canceled 600 contracts, but they won't tell us what they are.

I am on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. We don't know what they are. We don't know what the plan is for those 83,000 people that are going to be fired. I guess my question is: What do you think of an organization that says to a veteran: Thank you for your service, you are fired?

Mr. BOOKER. Well, as we were talking earlier, the firings are adding up. It is now going to be 80,000 people from the VA alone, a disproportionate number of veterans. So that is a rollback in service.

We already know that veterans in all of the government Agencies represent about 24 percent of the government workers we are talking about that are getting fired. And these are veterans—as I read their stories—that just want to keep serving their country from the national parks to serving their fellow veterans and helping them get healthcare.

We are seeing people that get exemplary reviews and then they are fired as probationary workers under the only way they can, according to laws, to say that they are a bad Federal worker.

Then they get insult on top of it when the highest—the most powerful

man in the world and the richest man in the world, Trump and Musk, come together and call the guy making \$45,000 serving other veterans, they call him a leech; they call him a parasite.

And so I hear what you are saying. Like, these are folks that I read their stories. They did things that few Americans would do. They went overseas and served in combat.

We had one of our dear friends here who lost her legs in combat, but she stands taller than most all the people in this body. These are the people that are so ingrained in their bodies and minds and souls to serve America, to love America. This President calls somebody like John McCain a sucker—the guy who dodged the draft.

So I hear what you are saying, and one of the things I heard you saying is it makes no sense. Nobody came to the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the Senate who actually approves the resources, establishes the Agencies, and should have the say—according to this document, this civically sacred text, our Constitution.

So what are you going to say to them if you don't even know what the plan is, you can't even explain to us what is your plan to making the VA system more efficient.

Here is the other thing. We passed in this body some of my favorite Senators like Jon Tester, whom I miss so much—maybe I just miss bumping into the guy because he was the only person in the Senate who let me run hallway all the way and hit him.

I used to joke that it was this test to see what happens when the unstoppable force beats the immovable object. He is a void in this place, but he stood for that PACT Act. He has the most fiery speeches, and finally we got that bill passed. We had to add tens of thousands of jobs because of the increased hundreds of thousands of people that were affected from these burn pits or from other challenges, and now we are cutting back 83,000 employees.

PATY MURRAY said something that affected me in my first weeks as a Senator when I, in New Jersey, sat down with women veterans, and they told me how long they had to wait for gynecological care. So what is this administration doing in its 83,000 cuts? Are they going to improve services to our female veterans? I don't believe it. I don't believe it. Show me I am wrong because we have an article I duty: oversight; checks and balances. Are we doing that right now?

One of the worst things I have seen happen in national security—and by the way, there are national security screwups on both parties. Nobody has a monopoly on this. Let's not be overly partisan here. But weeks ago, our—who are supposed to be the pros and set the example, our national security leadership was using a commercial app to communicate classified documents, and they had it on disappearing messages so they are violating the law of the land called the Preserving Public Records Act.

Now, I have heard from Republicans and Democrats. This is outrageous. There should be an investigation. We should be asking commonsense questions. Was this a pattern and practice of communication? How many other things that are classified have you been communicating about? There is a lot of really important questions that you should have to answer to, but where are the hearings, folks?

I just wonder why this body is shrinking from the articulated duties that we all raised our hands and said we would defend and preserve this Constitution and what it says we should do, what it says our jobs should do.

But you are Senator. I am a Senator. I can't tell you what the cut in the VA plan is. I can't tell you. They haven't come in here and told us. Are we doing our job? I can't tell you are we preserving and fighting for national security after one of the biggest national security scandals I have seen since I have been here.

They don't have providence in a partisan way, but they should answer for it. Are we doing our constitutional duty?

What about the administration that is ending the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, ending that Agency, ending the Department of Education? Do they have the right to do that according to this document? No.

Are we saying: Hey, we are going to stand up for the people who preserved this document? No. Thank God for the article III branch of government because they are being dragged into court, and Republican-appointed judges and Democrat-appointed judges are saying you can't do it.

Do you know what Trump is doing? He is ignoring the courts, and then he is demonizing the judges. You know that threats on judges in America, that threats have gone up 400 percent.

You know, I had a Federal judge—God bless her—where somebody thought they were going to her house. They did. She wasn't home, and they murdered her son and shot her husband. And Trump is out there threatening judges, dragging them on Twitter or X or whatever he is calling it now.

This is America. I know people on both sides of the aisle. We believe in common decency. We believe in respect. We believe that the highest office in the land should represent the best of our values not the worst, not a guy we wouldn't even let babysit our kids.

So I don't know what is going on with veterans, but I am not going to sit by and do nothing. That is why I am standing here. That is why I read the voices of so many veterans. Let's elevate the voices of the Americans who are being hurt and harmed. Let's talk for them if they can't talk for themselves. Let's tell them that we see you, we love you, and that all of us, we are going to fight for you.

Mr. SCHIFF. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. From you, my friend, who doubled the number of vegans in the Senate, I yield for a question while retaining the floor. Thank you for being here.

Mr. SCHIFF. I thank you for being here, Senator BOOKER. I always knew you were a towering intellect and a phenomenal and passionate speaker and advocate, but I did not know your stamina until today, and I am delighted to join you on the floor and have this opportunity to engage in a dialogue with you.

Mr. BOOKER. You can't engage in a dialogue. The Parliamentarian is going to stare me down. You can ask me questions.

Mr. SCHIFF. I stand corrected. I am happy not to engage in a dialogue with you but to ask you a question.

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHIFF. Let me ask the question this way. I was in the airport yesterday when someone handed me a note that said: "Please save our country."

"Please save our country."

And I think the genesis of the note was her profound concern over the direction of this country, over the increasingly authoritarian direction of this country and what is happening to the rule of law in America.

We look at institution after institution, and we see the guardrails of our democracy coming down. We see an assault on the rule of law unlike anything we have seen in modern history, maybe in the entire history of the United States of America—each and every institution, and why? Because they can, because they feel they can. So they are going after the colleges and universities.

Mr. BOOKER. Right.

Mr. SCHIFF. They are going after the institutions of higher learning. This was an attack that was presaged by JD VANCE years ago in his speech where he talked about "the professors are the enemy." They have to go after "the seat of learning."

So they are going after the universities, and they are using enormous cudgel: We will cut off your funds. We will cut off hundreds of millions in your funds if you do things, if you say things that we in the administration don't like. If you irritate the personal predilection of the President, you will have your funding cut. It is unlawful; it is illegal; and yet they are doing it because they can.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. They are going after major American law firms because these law firms had the audacity, the unmitigated temerity to hire lawyers or have lawyers who would take on causes inimical to the President's personal interests.

So they are going after these firms, and they are threatening the livelihood of these firms. We will close the courthouse doors. We will cut your clients off from contracts unless you kiss the ring.

And, of course, it is not just the firms or what they represent. It is everyone who is in need of a lawyer who now needs to know that, if they run afoul of the policy preference of the administration, they may never get a lawyer.

And why are they doing this at law firms? Because they can.

And they are going after judges. They are calling for the impeachment of judges. The latest is Judge Boasberg, in a case involving the administration grabbing a bunch of people, designating them as part of a Venezuelan gang, and without any due process, without any process at all, taking them to some maximum security prison in El Salvador, and, in fact, it would appear, doing so even against the court order, when the judge said: Turn those planes around.

Now, why are they encouraging the impeachment of a judge?

Well, I impeached a judge here. I was a lead manager before there was an impeachment of Donald Trump—or two of them. I led an impeachment of a corrupt judge. It is the same standard of high crimes and misdemeanors. It is not a high crime or misdemeanor to disagree in a case brought before a Federal district court, to disagree with the flawed reasoning of the government.

Why are they doing this to judges? Because they can. Because they can.

They are going after the press. They are going after the press and saying: If you don't call the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America, we are going to prevent you from attending press events at the White House or on Air Force One. And why are they doing this, this party that claims to be against censorship?

Why are they doing this to the press? Because they can. And they will continue to do so as long as they believe that they can until we—and not just we in this body, but we in this country—stand up to them and tell them: No, you can't. No, you can't.

If the slogan years ago was "Yes, we can," today it has to be "No, you can't."

No, you can't trample the rights of the American people. No, you can't censor our speech. No, you can't bring the weight of the Justice Department down on the American people. No, you can't because we are going to stand together.

We universities are not going to let you pick one of us off. We are going to band together.

No, we are not going to let you go after the law firms. We are going to band together.

No, we are not going to let you go after the press organizations. We are going to demand free speech.

Until we come together, until we mobilize in a massive way together to say, "No, you can't; no, you can't," they will continue to believe that, yes, they can violate the law with impunity.

So my question, Senator BOOKER, is how do we tell them: No, you can't—not with our country. No, you can't

violate the law, violate our values, violate our interests. No, you can't.

How do we tell the administration no?

Mr. BOOKER. My friend and colleague, I am hoping that we can figure out thousands of ignition points where Americans can stand up and do that call to their fellow Americans to do more. I am not upset at the folks that have been saying to Democratic Senators and House Members, and to me, challenging me—I have talked to so many of my constituents who said: You have got to do more.

And all of us have to interrogate ourselves because, like I said at the very beginning of this—at 7 p.m. on Monday night, I said: We have to say to history where we stood—where we stood when they were coming after our constitutional principles, where we stood when they were threatening judges to impeach them for making just decisions, where we stood when they were taking law firms and threatening their business unless they came and kowtowed to the great leader, where we stood when they were disappearing people from America without due process that even Antonin Scalia said they should have. Where were you when they came after the healthcare of the disabled, the healthcare of the children, the healthcare of the expectant mothers, the healthcare of seniors? Where were you when they attacked veterans, laying them off for no justifiable reason and attacking the VA services that they rely on?

Where were you when we turned our back on Ukraine? Where were you when we turned our back on our alliances?

Where were you when they took the economy down with tariffs, when they took the economy down by threatening it so consumer confidence drops? Where were you?

How many things are going on before we answer the question, as it says in Hebrew, Hineini. Hineini. Behold, Lord, here I am.

And so I confess that I have been imperfect. I confess that I have been inadequate to the moment. I confess that the Democratic Party has made terrible mistakes, that it gave a lane to this demagogue.

I confess we all must look in the mirror and say we will do better. And it is not just fighting ourselves on what we are against. We, the next generation, as the baby boomers are leaving the stage—the last baby boomer President—we have to say that we are going to redeem the dream. We are going to dream America anew.

We are going to start talking about bold things that don't divide people, that unite people—bold things that excite the moral imagination of a country to do better, to go higher, to call us together. This is the time when new leaders in our country must emerge.

I am not talking about Senators. I am talking about citizens. This time of despair and darkness doesn't demand

more darkness. We don't need to demean and degrade people who disagree with us. This is a time for us to do something bigger than that.

Do you think Martin Luther King in Birmingham hated Bull Connor or said: I am going to defeat this guy by bringing bigger dogs and bigger firehoses.

No. But he did say: We are going to be so creative that we are going to inspire the moral imagination of the Nation. We are going to call to the conscience of the country. We are going to excite them about who we could be.

When he went to the March on Washington he didn't stand there and complain about the demagogues. Listen to his speech. He didn't stand there and demean and degrade the Governor of Alabama. He didn't stand there and talk down to Bull Connor.

No, he stood before the American people and said:

It is not what you are against; it is what you are for.

I have a dream.

And now it is our generation. We have to redeem the dream. We have to excite people again.

He, in the highest office of our land, wants to divide us against ourselves, wants to make us afraid, wants to make us fear so much that we are willing to violate people's fundamental rights, we are willing to go after the speech on college campuses, to go after law firms, to go after freedom of the press. Don't let him do that.

Don't become like him. Be an American that says: I look to the future, and I am excited. Yes, things are tough right now. They are hard. They are scary. They are hurting. But we can overcome this.

Our American history, if it is nothing else—American history, if it is nothing else—it is a perpetual testimony to the achievement of impossible things against impossible odds. We are a nation that is great, not because of the people that are trying to whitewash our history, to remove great people, Native Americans, Black people, and women from our military websites.

I don't want a Disney vacation of our history. I don't want to whitewash history. I don't want to homogenize history. Tell me the wretched truth about America because that speaks to our greatness.

And so what do I want the people to do? It starts with us, man, and you are doing it. I see the courage of my colleagues. We are doing it, but we have to do more. And I am sorry. I am not going to be a politician that is going to say: We are going to do more for you.

I am going to be a politician, I am going to be a leader that demands more from America.

Mr. SCHIFF. Will the Senator yield for one last question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHIFF. Well, this gets to exactly, Senator BOOKER, your point. I am optimistic about this country, notwithstanding this deep, difficult, dark

period we are in. I am optimistic about this country, and I am optimistic because of something that Alexis de Tocqueville might have said. There is some dispute about whether he actually said this.

Mr. BOOKER. The mere fact that you can quote Alexis de Tocqueville—you have got me. You have me.

Mr. SCHIFF. I would like to believe he said this:

America is a great country because America is a good country.

If he didn't say it, he should have said it, because it is true. This country is what makes me an optimist. There are wonderful, beautiful, patriotic people in every State of the Union, and they will see us through this. But it does, I think, require all of us to be reminded, every now and then, of the better angels of our nature.

Now, I remember standing in that well during the first impeachment of Donald Trump.

Mr. BOOKER. I remember being right here in this seat watching you.

Mr. SCHIFF. And I will tell you, I approached that case as a prosecutor would approach a case—that I just needed to prove the President guilty of what he was charged with. But it became apparent very quickly that that was not enough, that notwithstanding the abundant evidence of his guilt, I needed to show something more. I needed to show that it was dangerous to keep him in office.

Now, tragically, events since have proven my point. But I made a different argument at that point of the trial, which I think gets us to the present moment, which is that truth should matter to us, what is right should matter to us. And even if it doesn't matter to the President, it should matter to us that we are decent as Americans. We are decent. We are good and decent people, as Americans. That is who we are.

We don't believe that when someone is needing medical help that they should be turned away. We don't believe that we should turn our back on our neighbor. We believe in extending our hand. We believe we should be able to disagree with each other without it becoming a personal hatred or antagonism. We are Americans. This is who we are.

I do think sometimes we forget, and we have to remind ourselves that, as Elijah Cummings used to say, "We are better than this."

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. We are better than this.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I miss Elijah.

Mr. SCHIFF. And you remind us of this all the time, Senator BOOKER. You really do. You also remind us that we are not defined by what we are against. We are defined by what we are for. And I am fully on the same page with you that we haven't lived up to our responsibility as a party and what we are for.

I think our democracy is in trouble because our economy has been in trouble. And I think our economy has been

in trouble because it is not like after the Depression or during the Depression, or the great recession, when people were out of work. The problem today is not that people are out of work. The problem today is that people are working. They are working, and they still can't get by.

And you have too many millions of Americans who see their quality of life, and they look at what their parents had and see it as better, and they look at the future for their kids and see it as worse.

And amidst that economic difficulty, they are ready to embrace anyone who offers something different, any demagogue who comes along and promises them they can fix it.

And while this demagogue is not going to fix it and, indeed, has made their lot much worse, it is not going to fix itself. It falls on us to come up with those big ideas.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Now, some of those big ideas are not new. Medicare for all, which I support, is a big idea. That would expand healthcare access for millions of people and make sure people, parents can go to work and understand if they get sick or their kid gets sick that they will have access to healthcare.

We haven't kept pace with changes in the nature of work, changes that are going to accelerate with artificial intelligence, changes which have meant that, over the last several decades, as the country has become more productive, that productivity and prosperity has simply not been shared with the people who made it possible.

And I think this economic anxiety, which is felt all over the world with these global changes in the marketplace, have put great stress on the whole democratic experiment.

(Mr. BANKS assumed the Chair.)

If democracy is not working for people, they will flirt with other models, like authoritarianism. But we are here to tell folks that is not the direction we want to go in. But it is still incumbent on us to offer bold ideas for how we can make the economy work for people again.

But I do think that what has led people into such bitter antagonisms with each other has been a lot of this uncertainty, the feeling that they are only a car payment or a health problem away from failure. It is up to us to address that. So I join you, Senator BOOKER, and your optimism about the American people. I join you in the call on all of us, really, in both parties.

But if they are not going to do it, it falls on us to put forward the big bold economic plans that will ensure that we can answer the central question of our time, which is, if you are working hard in America, can you still earn a good living?

We need to be able to answer that question, "Yes, you can."

Right now, what we are seeing with this tax cut for billionaires and large

corporations is just going to make the problem so much worse.

But I want to thank you, Senator BOOKER, for your irrepressible optimism about the country, which I share. I want to thank you for seizing the helm today and every day to put forward that positive vision for our Country.

And my question is, Where do you find the energy, my friend?

Mr. BOOKER. I don't know. I am finding it from my colleagues right now. I am finding it from my friends. I am finding it from their heart and their commitment, and I am finding it from the people whose names and stories we are reading. You know I appreciate your friendship. I am so happy you are my colleague now.

And I believe that our future, our tomorrows—as bad as things seem, I still believe our tomorrows are better than our yesterdays. I know you share it.

Mr. SCHIFF. Amen.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Before I yield to you, I just want you to know, I love you, my friend. Thanks for doing some good things recently, you and I, trying to solve some big problems. I appreciate that.

I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Senator. Unlike Senator SCHIFF who said that he didn't know of your stamina before now, I knew well the stamina of CORY BOOKER. I have always admired it—not just physical stamina, but moral stamina, the courage of conviction, the stamina to stand up and speak truth to power, which has become now one of the most common phrases that is used in public life.

But CORY BOOKER has epitomized it throughout his career, not only in this body, but as mayor of Newark and as a leader in sports when he was an all-American athlete at Stanford. That physical stamina was matched by a moralism that is invaluable today because Americans have come to prize, above all, integrity, authenticity, genuineness, which CORY BOOKER epitomizes.

It is not just his eloquence today on the floor and the soaring rhetoric that we have heard from him; it is his understanding and his sense of real-life impacts of what we do here on everyday Americans, and what everyday Americans are doing right now as we speak here on the floor.

Everyday Americans are in the grocery stores where they are seeing higher and higher prices. Everyday Americans are at the VA hospital where their doctors and nurses and clinicians and schedulers and counselors may be out of a job because they may be among the tens of thousands targeted for dismissal. Everyday Americans are in schools, K through 12 and higher education, where the resources available for their teachers in the classrooms right now in realtime are going to be

cut. In fact, the workforce at the Department of Education will be cut by one half as we speak and funds will be no longer available to teach everyday Americans.

And, of course, everyday Americans right now are in hospitals and clinics. They are undergoing treatment for life-threatening diseases. Right now, they are lying on a hospital bed with a needle in their arm, receiving other kinds of treatment that have been made available—lifesaving treatments—by the research at NIH that will be crippled because of the cuts that we are seeing.

And, of course, everyday Americans are receiving Social Security checks, and Social Security will be cut by this administration—Medicaid that provides for those everyday Americans who are in doctors' offices right now in America, even as we engage in this kind of soaring rhetoric.

Everyday Americans are contending with the real-life problems of living in America. We live in a country that has never been so unequal in terms of wealth and pay. If we look back to our own history, we see that inequality is a danger to us all. The stock market crash and depression occurred after the gilded age, when inequality became so drastic that the middle class was in danger.

And, of course, everyday Americans who, right now in the military, are experiencing anger, disgust, fear because the secrets about what they are doing, even as they engage in operations around the world—like those pilots who were going to bomb the Houthis, engaged in that Top Secret mission have learned that the details of that mission—the time of their launch, the targets, the timing of their strikes, the weather, the identity of their targets—all were being discussed over a non-secure channel by a careless, reckless Secretary of Defense. I don't need to go into the details of what was discussed, except to say our allies are reacting with that same disgust, anger, and fear and they are having doubts about sharing intelligence with us. The Israelis are outraged by what they have seen. The intel communities of other countries are aghast and appalled.

And we have yet to explore fully all of the potential ramifications, like what other conversations may have been on that unsecured kind of platform. Who else knew about them, what the motives were? There needs to be a criminal investigation. I have called for it. And everyday Americans have a right to be fearful and angry, just as those pilots should be and our allies and intelligence communities all around the world. We need not only an investigation, we need action to hold accountable the individuals—beginning with the Secretary of Defense, who should resign; the National Security Advisor, who should resign—but a criminal investigation launched by the FBI National Security Division, to hold accountable anyone responsible

for this breakdown of security, to meet the standard of public service that Senator BOOKER has outlined as what we should demand of ourselves, and the responsibility that the American people have a right to deserve.

So my question, really, is about the standard of public service that we should expect of our leaders and whether there is something we can do.

I am asked so often, Senator BOOKER, as I go back to Connecticut, and I am sure you are in New Jersey: What can we do?

What can we do?

You are meeting us on the floor of the Senate by showing what we should be doing—fighting back, sounding the alarm for everyday Americans who are in the grocery store, in their schools, at the VA clinics, Social Security offices. What can we do?

Mr. BOOKER. I am going to answer your question. I want to say thank you. There have been so many Congress people coming on to the floor from the House of Representatives. It reminds me of some other times when big things were happening and people would come to the floor. But this is a lot more, and I just want to express thank you for your kindness.

I also called the chairwoman of the CBC last night, texted her, and the force of the CBC, which has been giving me spirit and strength for a long time, is really one of the best parts of my time here as a U.S. Senator. The fact they have come through constantly means a lot to me.

I am grateful that my cousin Pam has been here the entire time—just like CHRIS MURPHY—the entire time in the Gallery. I love her and I am grateful for her. She is sitting next to my brother. I am thankful for that.

I want to answer your question. I get it all the time, and I am not sure how to answer it all the time. I read letters that got me emotional in the middle of the night where somebody would detail all their challenges. They would render personal information to me in letters about their struggles with healthcare, about their conditions, about their pain, about their hurt—just sending it out to their government official that they never probably met, hoping that they might just listen to you and be activated by your voice. Then many of them ended the letter with that question: I am here to help you in any way. It really moves me because I believe in the decency of our country.

And so I just want to try to answer that question more with me trying to think creatively about more that I could do as a leader because, as I said before, I think we as Democratic leaders have to start thinking more creatively. Obviously, we don't control the Senate, we don't control the House; but we have positions that were given to us in trust by the people we represent. In moments like this, they require us to be more creative or more imaginable or more persistent and dogged and determined.

I say that in front of some of my colleagues on the floor I know personally, like you, and some of my CBC colleagues sitting over here to my right who have been my rock for almost 13 years.

I just know, before I turn to my left to the woman who represents the most important person in my 55 years, my mom—I just want to say that the answer to that question has to be something that I will do, something more than I am doing now because the cause is so great, the challenges are so real.

I will do something that I have not done before to try to help my neighbor at a time of moral crisis in our country, and that I may be afraid, my voice may shake, but I am going to speak up more. I may be demoralized by what is happening, but I am going to find a way to get out of bed and breathe and know that I can make myself feel a little bit better by helping another person.

I don't know what it is, but we have to help each other now through this and know—I am a person of faith, and it was said to me by a colleague that though we would be willing to work through the night, but joy will come.

I am going to turn to my left because I always say that she is a Senator, but she has had one of the hardest jobs in all of America, which is to be the President of a shule. I met her and I realized she could probably do anything.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I know about that.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I am not Jewish, but my name is Booker, so I always say I am meshuga Booker.

There is a formal way I have to do this. I see you, I love you, and I am wondering if you have something to ask me.

Ms. ROSEN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. ROSEN. Well, Booker, you are a people of the book—people of the book.

Mr. BOOKER. That is powerful.

Ms. ROSEN. It is very powerful—the book you believe in, the books you believe in, what you read. We heard everyone quote the Bible, philosophers, great thinkers, and leaders and you are one of them. It has been my privilege to sit here next to you on this desk for the last 6 years I have been here, the best seat in the Senate.

Mr. BOOKER. You and I.

Ms. ROSEN. And take care of your mother who is my constituent—my constituent.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. ROSEN. I have your precious mother in our hands.

Mr. BOOKER. Whom I suspect, like my cousin and my brother in the Galleries, that my mom is watching—

Ms. ROSEN. Yes. Well—

Mr. BOOKER.—from Las Vegas.

Ms. ROSEN. And we appreciate what a good mother she was and how she raised you to be strong and to be smart and to be kind, and boy, oh, boy, did

she give you some damned stamina. I will just tell you that, sir. We are in awe.

But my question is, thank you, Mr. BOOKER. Thank you for what you are doing. Thank you for using your voice to stand up against the Trump administration's reckless and extreme policies. We have a lot to talk about here, so I am going to bring it back to Nevada because we have a lot of families in my State, and just like you, those letters are overwhelming and they bring me to tears. They stop me in the grocery store, in the airport, in the shopping mall, and in the gas station over and over again. People are worried. They are worried, and they want us to help. They are wondering about this.

People have talked to me about how high costs at the grocery store are squeezing their budgets. They are concerned that the Trump tariffs—well, what are they going to do? Prices ain't going down. They are going to make prices go up instead of going down. President Trump declared tomorrow is liberation day—liberation day. This is when he plans to impose the latest round of across-the-board tariffs for goods on several nations—tariffs that amount to a national sales tax on every single person who goes through a grocery store in Nevada and in New Jersey.

I see my esteemed colleague Senator DUCKWORTH of Illinois.

In every State in this Nation, there will be tariffs that will amount to being a national sales tax.

Now, Nevada's economy relies heavily on tourism. I don't have to tell anyone that. These tariffs don't target tourism specifically, but make no mistake, they will have a profound impact on a city like Las Vegas—the entertainment capital of the world—because when prices go up across the board, what happens? Families' budgets at the kitchen table—those kitchen table budgets are squeezed. It means the number of visitors coming to Las Vegas and the neighbors who fuel our economy go down. It means the price for every single person at every single hotel and for every single service we have goes up because of those tariffs. So it is going to have a devastating impact on Nevada—on our local economy, on our small businesses. Ninety-nine percent of businesses in Nevada are small businesses—small businesses. It is going to have a devastating impact on them and the good-paying jobs they support.

We see the impact. International travel is down in the United States—down. Now, that is a whole other discussion. Someone will be asking that question too. It is driving down our visitor numbers. It hurts our economy in Nevada. It hurts our economy all across this great Nation. In fact, looking for flights to Canada? They are already down by 70 percent compared to last year. Canada—our great neighbor, partner, and ally to the north—is down 70 percent.

The most troubling part is that a recent report estimates that up to 14,000 jobs—hospitality jobs—could be at risk due to decreased international travel as a result of these horrible, misguided tariffs.

I just want to tell you that I am looking at all of my colleagues, and I am looking at you, and you have given us the inspiration to stand here, to use our voice, to use our power to show that we are not without a say in this country. We are not without a say, and we cannot go quietly ever without that fight.

So, Senator BOOKER, I want to ask you what you think these tariffs are going to do not just to the place where your mom lives in Las Vegas but where families live all across this country and with every price at the market and every price at the gas station, the mall—wherever you go, wherever you go—and where people depend, like my Nevadans, on their livelihood for tourism.

So I will repeat what Senator BLUMENTHAL said: Senator BOOKER, what can we do? That is the question we are asked: What can we do?

Mr. BOOKER. I want to answer your question, but first I want to just say what you already know. You represent my mom. You represent one of her best friends, Lou. You represent my Aunt Shirley. You represent my Uncle Butch. You represent my Aunt Marilyn. You represent so much of my family.

This is the place where my father died, and when Harry Reid came to his bedside when he was sick and I was still running for this office and he showed me the extraordinary kindness of Senators from Nevada—that tradition has continued. I am so grateful for you. My family is grateful for you. I am grateful that we were founders of the Black Jewish Caucus, and, in fact, I am going to—

Ms. ROSEN. Our Juneteenth seder is coming up.

Mr. BOOKER. Our Juneteenth seder is coming up. I am going to put this on as you have it on.

I think about Edan Alexander and all those who are suffering. I am just so grateful for our friendship and what we have done against anti-Semitism, about what we have done for the Abraham Accords. You and I are those who find a lot of ways to work with people.

The best thing I saw in you was on January 6. Sitting in this row were me, you, and MARK KELLY, and I always say that often in the most difficult of circumstances, you see the best of people. I don't know if you remember this, but staffers started coming in. They rushed in. Usually, you have to have special identification. Then some of them stood behind us. They were crying, they were upset, and they were frightened. I just watched you go from Senator to mother, and I watched you comforting people in their times of fear—when they thought they were going to be killed, literally—and you

were this voice of comfort, this voice of calm. I saw you in one of our country's worst crises. I saw your light. I saw your love. I saw the Jewish mom, and I benefited from that.

I just feel that Trump mocks us. What does his liberation day mean to the people who are shackled to debt? They are shackled with medical debt and they are shackled with student debt so that they can't afford the rising costs of groceries.

What does his liberation mean to people who are chained by fear, who are right now waiting with bated breath to see if the Medicaid Programs they rely on are going to be cut?

What does his liberation mean to people who are literally in jails right now because they were disappeared from our streets?

What does his liberation mean to people who can't afford homes because of his tariffs or to people who dreamed of a new car but that is going to go up as well?

I don't know what he means by "liberation." I honestly don't. I wish he could explain it to the American people.

Who is liberated? In these financial times, who is liberated? I don't think the law firms feel liberated. They are so threatened by you that they felt the only way they could get out from under the threat of you is to come to you and beg and offer and say "We will do this" and say "We will give you millions of dollars of pro bono work." I don't think they feel liberated.

What about the people who are banned from the press corps because they won't call it the Gulf of America? The idea of the freedom of the press—do they feel his liberty? What does his liberty mean?

What does Donald Trump's liberty day tomorrow mean in a nation where I read in letter after letter of people who feel like their liberty is gone, that they are losing sleep at night, worried about Social Security?

What does liberty mean to the veteran who was laid off who fought for my liberty?

What does Donald Trump's liberty mean? What is he talking about?

What does his liberty mean to Canada, who fought next to us, who died next to Americans who were fighting for our own causes? What does his liberty mean to them?

I don't understand Donald Trump. I really don't. There are going to be Ph.D. students writing about him for generations. He will love that in Heaven. He will look down and say: I am so happy that people are talking about me.

But I will tell you this: I love great Presidents. I love that Lincoln said:

With malice toward none, with charity [toward] all.

But I hear Donald Trump say with malice toward everybody who does not tell him how great he is, and charity—I don't know if he understands that, what it means to have sympathy and

compassion and empathy and to help people whether they like you or not.

I love great Presidents. I love FDR: "You have nothing to fear but fear itself." But in letter after letter after letter was the word "fear" and the word "terror." I was reading from voices from my State and across the country. It says: If Donald Trump is saying be afraid, be afraid of me, the big man with the power. Be afraid. Be afraid. Be afraid.

There was another President who said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." Yet Ukrainian-Americans are watching their President go not "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall"; they are saying "Hey, Mr. Putin, come in and take the Donbas. I am going to start the negotiations—not with Zelenskyy at the table. I am going to call him a dictator. I am going to start the negotiations from a position of giving Putin what he wants—Ukrainian sovereign land—and that is where we will start the negotiation."

I love John F. Kennedy. Quoting a poet: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." With Donald Trump, it is not "Ask not what your country can do for you"; it is "Ask what can you do for Donald Trump because I will threaten you until you kowtow. I will threaten to run primaries against you if you don't fall in line and vote for things you know are wrong. I will terrorize your law firm unless you come to me and kiss my ring. I will make political your applications for your merger. I will drop cases against you. I will pardon you if," as he said in a recent pardon—he was a pro-Trump guy.

I don't understand this. I really don't. I don't understand why he tries to divide Americans.

I got on a plane once. I am on a plane, and I am juggling to put my carryon up. I get lots of reactions in airports, I have to say on the whole part, good, but occasionally—I think my colleagues next month, next May, should send me a Mother's Day card because occasionally I get called "you mother" with something following it.

So here I am putting up my overhead baggage, and I sit down next to two people—the Presiding Officer before this, my friend from Alabama—two Alabamians, one 80 years old and one 60 years old, mother and a daughter.

They saw people paying attention to me, and they said: Who are you? Are you a professional athlete?

As a middle-age, overweight, Black guy, my ego wasn't insulted. I wanted to say: Well, I could be, but I chose to serve the people.

But no. I go: No, ma'am, I am not.

Well, who are you then?

Well, I am a Senator.

And we are so conditioned in America. If we meet a Congress person out and about, the first thing we want to know is, whose team are you on—my team or their team? It is us versus them. We have a horrible dynamic of tribalism in our country.

I took a deep breath, and I looked at these two great American women and said: Ma'am, I am a Democrat.

The woman next to me looks at me, suddenly sour, and she said: I should have brought my Trump hat.

And she wheeled away from me.

Immediately, I said: Do you know what, I am not going to dance to this tune. I am going to scratch this record. I am going to scratch this record.

I looked at her, and I go: Oh, my gosh. Donald Trump signed two of the biggest bills I wrote in Congress into law—the FIRST STEP Act, which we passed in this body with 87 votes. We would have gotten 88 if one of my dear friends and colleagues was not off trying to do whatever in the world and he wasn't here to vote on it. I talked about opportunity zones and working with TIM SCOTT to get billions of dollars invested into some of our country's poorest rural and urban areas.

Now they were confused, but by the end of that flight, Donald Trump didn't divide us, though. By the end of that flight, I was talking to them like fellow Americans, and we found so many points of connection, so much common humanity, and so much common cause.

These outrage machines—TV and these devices—I want to say to America that their financial interest is to keep your eyes on the screen as much as you possibly can. Do you know what sells? Division. Divide. Moral indignation.

I will tell you this: I have this great friend who is part of the bald club—Van Jones. He told me this story that he was on "Crossfire" on CNN. Van Jones got on with Newt Gingrich.

Van Jones—the green activist guy I met in law school—is an extraordinary man. He speaks like a poet to me. He worked in the Obama White House. Then Newt Gingrich is a very known Republican.

The two of them sit down. But Brene Brown writes something extraordinary. She writes: It is hard to hate up close, so pull people in.

So they get on this show called "Crossfire," and they found out that with all the differences they have, they also have commonality, things they agree on, and they actually kind of like each other.

So they go to the producers, and they say: Hey, could you let us do a final segment called "Cease-Fire"? Can you let us do a final segment called "Cease-Fire"?

The producer said: Yes. Go ahead. Go ahead.

So they do this last segment talking about the areas where they agreed, but the producer comes running in after a few segments, saying: Stop them. Can't do it.

Why? Ratings are going down.

There are a lot of legitimate differences in places where I am going to stand my ground and fight for people's healthcare, for people's Social Security. I am going to fight. But I am never going to get in a position where

anybody in this country can make me hate another American because this is the age where we have to figure out how to live up to those words up there, "e pluribus unum." That is the call of our ancestors, to put more "indivisible" into this "one nation under God." That is the challenge.

There are enough things that we agree on in America, especially when we stop and talk about things—like the child tax credit. Most Americans are for that.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, gosh, I have been waiting for you. For crying out loud, why didn't you stop me earlier?

Ms. DUCKWORTH. You were on a roll. You were on a roll.

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, come on. Come on, Senator.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Will you yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. I don't know what kind of food you eat on that vegan diet of yours, but I need to figure out more of that vegan diet.

One place where we can and do care that unites us as a nation is the role of our Nation's veterans, the heroes who have sacrificed for us—although, with this President, I guess he doesn't hold veterans in the same esteem. As someone who has bled for this Nation, I guess I join the ranks of the suckers and losers who have bled and died for this Nation, in the President's estimation.

But I just wanted to start off by saying thank you, again, Senator BOOKER, for all that you are doing as you hold the floor today but also every other day to underline the pain and damage that Donald Trump and Elon Musk are doing not just to our country but to middle-class Americans throughout our country.

Tragically, that harm even extends to our Nation's veterans, who have sacrificed so much to protect this country and keep Americans safe, who should be shielded from this needless chaos and uncertainty.

Senator BOOKER, I know you are well aware that this administration is firing more veterans than any other administration in modern history. It has been reported that this administration, in its first few months in office, has fired approximately 6,000 veterans from Federal service across this country.

This list of firings, especially at the VA, has resulted in operations for our veterans being canceled. We have seen reports of the caregivers hotline—a hotline that was set up to support the caregivers who provide medical care given to their loved ones who served and sacrificed and are now disabled—there are delays in that hotline being answered because Donald Trump fired all of these veterans.

There are people who support the crisis hotline who were also fired. I know this because some of them were my

constituents and asked for help. I had one individual who served in the military for over two decades and did such a good job on the crisis hotline as a frontline person answering the phone, trying to prevent their brothers and sisters from the idea of suicide—they did such a good job that they were promoted to be a trainer, they were promoted to be a supervisor, which then made them probationary, and they were fired.

We were able to get some of these people their jobs back. Some of them are still out there without their jobs.

This is what Donald Trump and Elon Musk have already done. This does not help our Nation's veterans. This does not help our Nation's heroes. If anything, it is a betrayal to them. It is a betrayal, a cruel betrayal, to the men and women who bravely answered the call to serve our country in uniform—a call that this President dodged five different times when he had the opportunity to serve.

Men and women in uniform came home from serving, and many of them chose to continue their service to our country as Federal employees. How are Elon and Trump thanking these brave, selfless Americans? They are doing it by showing them the door and leaving them wondering how they will be able to afford next week's groceries or next month's rent, forcing them to look for new jobs.

The Senator from New Jersey and I are both working together to help our heroes get their jobs back, which is why I have introduced the Protect Veterans Jobs Act to reinstate all veterans who were wrongly fired from their Federal jobs by Trump and Musk. It is a critical bill to help those who have already been fired.

But according to recent reports, Trump and Musk are just getting started. From everything that we have seen, they are planning on firing another 80,000 VA employees, almost a third of whom are veterans themselves. So that is going to be another 25 veterans on the chopping block on top of the 6,000 who have already been fired. It is a complete betrayal from Trump and from Musk.

Firing these VA employees will even harm veterans who Trump is not firing because it is going to force them to wait longer to see their healthcare providers. It is going to make them wait longer to have their disability claims adjudicated. It is going to make them wait longer to have someone pick up their calls at the Veterans Crisis Line. It is going to make them wait even longer and their loved ones wait even longer to have their burial and funeral expense reimbursement requests processed and so much more, all while the VA's backlog for unprocessed claims continues to grow.

I have another question for you, but first, for the Senator from New Jersey, I was wondering if you could tell us if you have heard from your veterans who have been fired, if you have heard from

your veterans who have seen their services delayed in New Jersey and around the country?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

This is my veterans book. This is what I was reading from earlier. And everything you are saying is right, and it is such an insult.

I read stories from our veterans. It is such an insult to the highest calling of our country, to stand and serve, as you did—as you did—injured veterans, disabled veterans.

I read an article about thousands of disabled veterans who want to serve their country, love this Nation so much that they want to serve in humble jobs doing noble things. And how do we treat them? I will say 83,000 people being laid off. A quarter of them are our veterans from the VA itself, including veterans who do things for the Park Service in our national parks, veterans who do things for us in the Defense Department, veterans who do things for us across this country.

I find in my State that some of the greatest leaders I have met in my State are veterans who are still serving veterans. And then veteran entrepreneurs—you know the data—they are incredibly successful. They add to our economy.

The government is cutting not just veteran jobs; they are cutting contracts with veteran-owned businesses.

I don't understand how you can say out of one side of your mouth that you honor and respect our veterans, which is not what our President has always said—dear God, what he said about John McCain.

I still remember John McCain was in a townhall with Barack Obama, fighting fiercely to be the President of the United States, and somebody gets up and says that Barack Obama—as if it is an insult; it is not—is a Muslim or something, and he grabs the mike back and corrects her. One of his voters—he corrects her on national TV: This is wrong. He is a guy who loves his wife, a Christian, loves his family.

I mean, that is character and honor. Can you ever see that from our President now?

And this is how wrong I was. I want to admit I have made mistakes. I have been wrong.

I remember where I was when he said in his campaign that he is no hero, that people who are captured are not heroes. I said to the people who were with me: There goes his 15 minutes of fame. I thought that was the end of Trump. But somehow you can become President of the United States when you insult the veterans who serve.

I know you have another question, but can I read you—John Lewis and John McCain—the two Johns—are coming up a lot so far in my 20 hours. But I want to read you this. I want to read this when you are here.

This is John McCain writing:

Let me [all] tell you what I think about our Pledge of Allegiance, our flag, and our

country. I want to tell you a story about when I was a prisoner of war. I spent 5 . . . years at the Hanoi Hilton. In the early years of our imprisonment, the North Vietnamese kept us in solitary confinement or two or three to a cell.

In 1971 the [North Vietnamese] moved us from these conditions of isolation into large rooms with as many as 30 or 40 men to a room.

This was, as you can imagine, a wonderful change and was a direct result of the efforts of millions of Americans [led by people like Nancy and Ronald Reagan] on behalf of a few hundred POWs, 10,000 miles from home.

One of the men who moved into my cell was Mike Christian. Mike came from a small town [near] Selma, Alabama. [He] didn't wear a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old. At 17, he enlisted in the US Navy. He later earned a commission. . . . [He] became a Naval Flight Officer, and was shot down and captured in 1967. Mike had a keen and deep appreciation of the opportunities this country and our military provide for people who want to work and want to succeed.

The uniforms we wore in prison consisted of a blue, short-sleeve shirt, trousers that looked like pajama trousers, and rubber sandals that were made out of automobile tires. I recommend them highly. My pair lasted my entire stay.

As a part of the change in treatment, the Vietnamese allowed some prisoners to receive packages from home, and some of these packages were handkerchiefs, scarfs, and other items of clothing. Mike got himself a piece of white cloth and a piece of red cloth and fashioned himself a bamboo needle. Over a period of a couple of months, he sewed the American flag on the inside of his shirt.

Every afternoon, before we had a bowl of soup, we would hang Mike's shirt on the wall of our cell, and say the Pledge of Allegiance. I know that saying the Pledge of Allegiance may not seem the most important or meaningful part of our day now—

Our day in the Senate—

but I can assure you that for those men in that stark prison cell, it was indeed the most important and meaningful event of our day.

One day, the Vietnamese searched our cell and discovered Mike's shirt with the flag sewn inside, and removed it. That evening they returned, opened the door of the cell, called for Mike Christian to come out, closed the door of the cell, and for the benefit of all of us, beat Mike Christian severely for the next couple of hours. Then they opened the door of the cell and threw him back inside. He was not in good shape. We tried to comfort and take care of him as well as we could. The cell in which we lived had a concrete slab in the middle on which we slept. Four naked light bulbs hung in each corner of the room.

After things quieted down, I went to lie down to go to sleep. As I did, I happened to look in the corner of the room. Sitting there beneath that dim light bulb, with a piece of white cloth, a piece of red cloth, another shirt and his bamboo needle, was my friend Mike Christian, sitting there, with his eyes almost shut from his beating, making another American flag. He was not making that flag because it made Mike Christian feel better. He was making that flag because he knew how important it was for us to be able to pledge our allegiance to our flag and our country.

Duty, honor, country—we must never forget those thousands of Americans who, with their courage, with their sacrifice, with their lives, made those words alive for all of us. That is our veterans.

That is you. That is you, my friend.

And Trump is coming after them. DOGE is coming after them. They are firing them right now. And are we silent, America? Are we silent when the bravest amongst us, the most honorable amongst us, the most noble amongst us are losing their jobs? Did you speak up when they came for American veterans? When they fired them for no good reason, what did you do? What did you say? I say no.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Thank you for what you have said.

John McCain was a true hero. He said the same thing to me when I first met him.

I do have a question for you, which will come later, but I thought I would tell you the story of how I met John McCain.

I was recently wounded. Within weeks of being able to finally sit up for the first time, I was in physical therapy, and Senator McCain came and visited us. The nurses and occupational therapists and physical therapists came running in and said "Senator McCain, this Captain Duckworth. She is a hero, just like you" and said to me, "You are a hero, like Senator McCain. You were both shot down."

Senator McCain looked at me and said in that voice of his: Didn't take no hero to fly into a missile. The good pilots don't get shot down.

And I knew then and there that I really liked him because he was right: The real heroes were the buddies that carried me out of that field in Iraq. The real hero is the sergeant in the rescue bird that carried me out and has to live with the post-traumatic stress. The real heroes are all the men and women who survived and came home and need the care that they have rightfully earned, the care that we are providing for them with the PACT Act, a bill that you supported, a bill that you spoke up for, even while Members, our colleagues across the aisle, many of them, said it was too expensive.

And at a time when we should be expanding the PACT Act, when we should be recognizing more of the illnesses and injuries that came out of service around burn pits and toxic substances, you have a President who is cutting the VA, who wants to cut those jobs, who wants to go after our veterans' benefits, who, just like Elon Musk has said, sees veterans as people with their hands out.

We don't have our hands out. We are simply asking for what this country promised us.

Where were you, Mr. President; where were you, Elon, when this country asked for someone to serve? When this country asked: Who among you will leave your family, leave your friends, leave your neighbors, and put on her colors and defend her—not for your mom, not for your dad, not for

your family members, but for strangers who will never know your name, who will never know your sacrifice? Who among you will do that?

Thank God that from Lexington and Concord, from Iwo Jima, from Ia Drang Valley, from Kandahar, from Fallujah there were Americans who stood up and said: I will. I will defend this great Nation. I will wear her colors with pride.

And all we have to do as a nation is live up to one tiny little percentage of that sacrifice that they made, let them have the benefits that they have earned, and yet Donald Trump and Elon Musk are cutting those benefits.

The biggest predictor—the biggest predictor—of veterans' homelessness is not post-traumatic stress disorder. It is not a health condition. The biggest predictor of veterans' homelessness is lack of employment, not having a job. That begins the spiral downward for veterans that ends up with them becoming homeless.

And I will tell everyone in these Chambers and in this Nation: We are all dishonored when a veteran must lay their head down on the very same street that he or she defended, to sleep that night. We are all dishonored.

The VA has done tremendous work—tremendous work—to fight veterans' homelessness, and that has been a bipartisan effort. And these cuts—these cuts that are costing veterans their jobs—are going to set some of those veterans, unfortunately, on that path to homelessness. These cuts are going to mean that those veterans homelessness programs that would prevent others from becoming unhoused—those programs will not be able to take care of all the veterans, the demand.

I am already seeing it. I spent this past weekend in Missouri, at the Cochran VA Medical Center, hearing about the challenges that they are facing. They need to expand. They don't need to shrink. They said there are going to be another 25,000 veterans moving into the area. They actually have to expand their services.

And yet Elon Musk, enabled by Donald Trump, is cutting veterans' jobs, veterans' benefits because, according to them, veterans aren't heroes; we are suckers and losers.

Well, I beg to differ. I beg to differ. I am sure that my colleague from New Jersey knows that firing 80,000 employees from the Department of Veterans Affairs wouldn't just cause longer delays for veterans. It will doom our VA's ability to process claims and the influx of claims under the PACT Act, a law that is helping to ensure veterans who were exposed to toxins while serving can get the care that they have earned, with more than 1 million claims already approved in the short time since it has become law.

I can't think of a single good reason to hurt so many veterans, and I will just ask the Senator from New Jersey: Can you think of any reasons?

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, God, I am very moved by your comments. I want to

say that, from DAVID MCCORMICK to JACK REED, the Senate has a good number of people who served this Nation, who answered the call. They should all get our honor and respect. Senator BLUMENTHAL served, and he has a son, a Navy SEAL.

We should have a reverence for those people because a lot of them didn't make it back. A lot of people didn't make it back. And a lot of people who came home came home with horrible wounds, visible and invisible.

We should all be ashamed of the veterans that are committing suicide. We should all be ashamed of veteran homelessness. We have the capacity—we are a great enough nation—to help them.

But the ones that didn't come back, they watch over us. They look down upon this Nation.

I want to read you one more thing because I have—I was raised by parents who could not—they seemed really worried, raising me in an affluent town in a beautiful home, that I would not recognize how extraordinarily privileged I was.

My dad used to say to me: Boy, don't walk around this house like you hit a triple. You were born on third base.

My dad used to say things to me like: Boy, don't sit at this table and not realize that you drink deeply from wells of freedom and liberty that you did not dig. You eat from banquet tables of blessings prepared for you by your ancestors. You must metabolize those blessings, not so that you can pay your ancestors back but so you can pay it forward.

My dad, when I got degrees from Stanford, Oxford, and Yale, said: Boy, you got more degrees than the month of July, but you ain't hot. Life ain't about the degrees you get; it is about the service you give.

So MCCORMICK and REED and TAMMY—I am here because of people that died for this country, that stormed beaches in Normandy for this country, they were at Iwo Jima for this country, they liberated Nazi concentration camps for this country. They are buried—I have seen their burials in Thailand, in fields full of American soldiers who never made it home. And every time I see one of those, I get overcome with emotion. I can't think about—when I look at their ages: 18, 19, 20, 21.

So let me read this. And I am going to compose myself because you got me all emotional, TAMMY. I thought you were my friend.

This is a poem written by Billy Rose. You know it, probably. It is called "The Unknown Soldier." And just listen to the words, and let them echo and see if we are living up to them, if our President lives up to them. The most powerful person in the world or the richest man in the world, are they respecting?

There's a graveyard near the White House
Where the Unknown Soldier lies,
And the flowers there are sprinkled
With the tears from mother's eyes.

I stood there not so long ago
 With roses for the brave,
 And suddenly I heard a voice
 Speak from out the grave:
 "I am the Unknown Soldier,
 The spirit voice began
 "And I think I have the right
 To ask some questions man to man.
 "Are my buddies taken care of?
 Was their victory so sweet?
 Is that big reward you offered
 Selling pencils on the street?
 "Did they really win the freedom
 They battled to achieve?
 Do you still respect that Croix de Guerre
 Above that empty sleeve?
 "Does a gold star in the window
 Now mean anything at all?
 I wonder how my old girl feels
 When she hears a bugle call.
 "And that baby who sang
 'Hello, Central, give me no man's land'
 Can they replace her daddy
 With a military band?
 "I wonder if the profiteers
 Have satisfied their greed?
 I wonder if a soldier's mother
 Ever is in need?
 "I wonder if the kings, who planned it all
 Are really satisfied?
 They played their game of checkers
 And eleven million died.
 "I am the Unknown Soldier
 And maybe I died in vain,
 But if I were alive and my country called,
 I'd do it all over again.

Thank you, Senator. Every time I see you, I have such reverence and gratitude that I get to serve alongside of you. I didn't serve in the military alongside of you like those courageous soldiers, like those people who carried you, at risk to themselves, the people who saved your life, the people who helped you in rehab, the people that empowered you to get back on your feet and run for one of the highest offices in the land. And then you serve here with distinction because you don't forget who helped you get here.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Just take care of my buddies.

Mr. BOOKER. Exactly. And my dad, who is in heaven with a lot of the other good folks from American history, I don't know what he would think of his son, but I know he would be proud of you.

All right. Let's talk about the economy.

Mr. COONS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Oh, CHRISTOPHER COONS.

Mr. COONS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. Is the Senator familiar with Rory Badger of Delaware? Is the Senator familiar with my guest to the speech to a joint session of Congress delivered by President Trump just a few weeks ago?

Mr. BOOKER. So every time you ask me the question, we have to go through the same thing. I am slightly familiar, yes, because you talked about it, but I would be really happy if you ask me another question and you filled in some gaps.

Mr. COONS. If I might, I simply want to ask my colleague—

Mr. BOOKER. Then I yield for a question. If you want to ask me a question, I yield for a question while retaining the floor, with the recognition that I have to do it because I am standing between two Delawareans, and I am a little nervous. A New Jerseyan never wants to be between two Delawareans.

Mr. COONS. To my colleague and friend from the great State of New Jersey, I simply am asking the question: Are you familiar with a marine from Seaford, DE? His name is Rory Badger. He is not a man of politics. He is not a partisan. And he only came to my attention when he called my office for assistance.

Rory Badger volunteered to serve our Nation, was deployed to Afghanistan, and is a decorated combat veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. Working through the impact of his service, he has returned to the United States and was engaged by Fish and Wildlife in Delaware and doing great work to promote conservation.

With a young wife and a young son, Marine Badger reached for what was his dream job: to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. All Rory wanted to do, he conveyed to me in a letter and then in person when he came to visit here—all he wanted to do—was to help farmers on the Delmarva Peninsula conserve their land, create wildlife habitat, protect the environment, and be in places both beautiful and still.

As you, my friend and colleague, have documented in long discussion and debate in the last hour, he is one of thousands of veterans who woke to receive an unjust and unwarranted termination email that said it was for cause, without citing any cause, and that threw him into the chaos and hurt of having been summarily fired by the American Government.

He has ultimately been rehired, thankfully, but that period of chaos and of loss made him question our Nation and its commitment to our veterans.

I also—I will share with my colleague—had the opportunity to visit with our friend Senator McCain the prison where he was imprisoned for 5½ years, tortured repeatedly, and lived through the experiences you have just shared of fellow veterans risking their lives to do the most simple thing that we take for granted at the beginning of every day here: to pledge allegiance to our flag.

I had a chance, on visiting the "Hanoi Hilton" with our friend and former colleague Senator McCain, to ask him a simple question, which was at the end of his describing the period when friends were beaten horribly, when some were killed, and when his Vietnamese captors told him: We found out who your father is, a four-star admiral, and so we will release you any day.

I simply asked him: Knowing that you could at any moment, on any day,

raise your hand and say, "I will accept your offer," and go home, how did you endure another 5 years of torture and imprisonment?

His answer simply: To do so would not have been honorable.

My question to you, my friend and colleague: Was the firing of Rory Badger honorable? Is the leadership of our current administration and its treatment of our veterans honorable? Are the values shown by the decisions being made by Elon Musk and his team at DOGE honorable?

Are we putting at risk the very honor of our Nation in the mistreatment of the veterans of this country? This question I put to my friend and colleague.

Mr. BOOKER. I thank you, Senator COONS, by your strength of voice, by your tone, by the colleague and citizen that you invoke. You are saying the answer with strength, my friend.

How do we judge our Nation? What measure do we judge America? Is it by how tall our buildings are? Well, those are great marvels, but other countries have taller buildings. God, maybe Ezra Klein has got me so focused now on making our Nation do bold and build great things.

But does the speed of our rails, as an Amtrak guy, speak to the greatness of our Nation? No. Other nations have faster rail.

Does the wealth of our people—were there more billionaires than any other country—does that speak to the greatness of our Nation? No.

I think the things that speak to the greatness of a nation is: How do we take care of each other? How do we take care of our elders who deserve our respect and our reverence and gratitude for building America, for sustaining America, for doing the hard jobs to raise families to set the next generation on their way.

I think we should be judged by how we treat our children. They are the only true hope we have of seeing tomorrows that we will never live through. I think we should be judged by how we treat the sick. Whether it is people with the disease of alcoholism or mental health or crippling cancers or chronic diseases, what do we do?

I think we should be judged by how we nurture our families. God, we put American families under crazy stress. Affordable childcare, paid family leave, other nations—our competitors—have these things.

I think we should judge the greatness of our Nation by how we treat our veterans, these honorable men and women, some of them who gave their last measure—last measure of their devotion on fields across the world from Thailand to Gettysburg and gave their lives.

Those who came home—those who came home, how they—the America they experienced will speak to the truth of who we are. So I am in this place like you are in this place. We have been friends for a long time. I am

blaming you a little bit because you are one of those people I called and said: Hey, I am thinking about running for Governor. I am thinking about running for Senator.

You told me to come here, man. I am joking. I love you for it. I am honored and blessed that New Jerseyans sent me here.

I know that you and I are working to—and let's talk like we talk when we are not on the floor of the Senate. We both are deeply devoted Christians. You told me one of my favorite stories in the Senate, which I won't tell right now. I have been asking you to tell that story. I hope you will tell it, but it is just about your parents.

James Baldwin said: Children are never good at listening to their elders, but they never fail to imitate them.

You are a great reflection of the stories of your parents you told me, and you and I grapple with this faith of ours, which demands the most radical love—radical love. What does the Bible say about immigrants? I mean, come on. What does the Bible say about the poor? What does the Bible say about the hated, the prostitute, the leper, the people who are looked down upon?

What is the story of the Prodigal Son? What does Matthew 25 say about how we should live? "Even as the least of these you did unto me."

How many times does the Bible mention poverty. How many?

Mr. COONS. Two thousand.

Mr. BOOKER. I am abiding by it. I will not yield to you. But I knew you would know it. Two thousand times it mentions poverty. Does it say we should scorn the poor? Does it say we should ignore the poor? No. It calls us to love our neighbor. No exceptions to that.

Mr. COONS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you, man. I have been waiting for that question. The prayers of the righteous and vails. You are a righteous man. I have a lot of work to do.

I yield for a question, but I am retaining the floor.

I tried to instigate you, CHRIS. I tried to throw out Jesus bait.

Mr. COONS. You have, sir.

Mr. BOOKER. Good. Thank God. I yield for a question about whatever you want to ask me for, but I am retaining the floor.

Mr. COONS. To my good friend and colleague, as we transition to comments about the economy, are you familiar with the very first time that Jesus stood in his home synagogue in Nazareth to preach?

He read from the scroll a passage from, I believe, Isaiah 61:1–2. This is recorded in Luke Chapter 4. And it is a well-known passage. I rely upon it to understand what was the ministry of Jesus centrally about.

He says:

This is fulfilled in your hearing today, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

I don't think it is possible to read the Gospels and to read the Torah and to understand righteousness without hearing over and over and over in the course of the Old and New Testaments a call to respect those at the margins of life, a call to be generous and open-hearted and kind to those who suffer and struggle, to be attentive to and present to those who are imprisoned, who are widows, who are orphans, to allow the gleaning of a field, which means to make sure that out of an abundance of our productivity on our farms, we make sure we feed those who hunger here at home and abroad.

You cannot miss the central message, which is, as you have said: kindness to those on the margins, attentiveness to those in need, good news to the poor.

So in this season of Lent, I ask my friend and colleague whether he is aware of our President's intention to impose significant tariffs sometime today or tomorrow that may raise the costs for working families in our Nation, that may make harder the lives of those who struggle to pay for their children's food and medicines and schooling, that instead of meeting his promise to make America affordable again, we will almost certainly make America less affordable for those who are exactly those to whom we are called to give attention kindness and service?

I ask my colleague and my friend: Are you aware of President Trump's so-called "liberation day" that will impose, in fact, thousands of dollars of additional costs on the working families of America who struggle so hard to make ends meet in a direct violation of a call to care for those in need?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes, I am aware. I said it earlier that he calls it Liberation Day, and I am not sure what he means by that because Americans will not, by this move, be liberated from high prices. They won't be liberated from watching their 401(k)s dwindle in value as the stock market goes down. They won't be liberated from the high cost of groceries. They won't be liberated from the high cost and hard availability of housing.

He calls it Liberation Day, but Americans won't be liberated from crushing debt, from medical debt, from student loan debt, parents who are struggling to take care of their parents and their children who rely on Medicaid because a parent has Alzheimer's and a child has a disability and they are trying to make it all work. But yet they are shackled in fear because they see that recommended to a House Committee on Energy and Commerce was to find \$880 billion of cuts to the programs that they are relying on as a lifeline to keep their family together.

Who is liberated? Who is liberated by the tariffs that he is going to come and bring onto a country where half this Nation is dealing with a tough, tough economic reality, where half of the renters in this country—you and I were

both local leaders. We know it is technically the definition of housing insecurity if you are paying more than a third of your income on rent.

CHRIS COONS, you love people. You know people. You traveled Delaware. It is a much smaller State. I do say that with some little bit of twisted non-Christian arrogance from New Jersey looking down, but you know people in your State. I have been with you in your State. You are connected to your communities.

So you know people that are struggling just to make ends meet. You know people that are one emergency away like a car accident or a sickness that forces them to miss a week of work and a paycheck, that that will throw their lives in financial ruin.

Is this President doing his promises to make their lives better? President Trump is calling his tariffs Liberation Day. Do you think Canada feels liberated from the bully neighbor that is Donald Trump? You think Greenland feels liberated from the bullying nature? Do you think Panama feels liberated?

What about universities that are cutting NIH funding, that are cutting the scientific research that will cure the diseases in the future and will alleviate suffering? They now are not allowing postdocs to come to their school. They are not hiring. They are slashing the number of engineering students that they are allowing in because they are terrified this President is menacing indirect costs. Is that liberation?

Seventy-one days in—now 72 days. I ask you: Are you better off than you were 72 days ago economically? I ask that question. Ask it to your friends. Are they better off economically? Well, I don't see how they could be because prices are up. The stock market is down. The risk of recession is climbing. Consumer confidence is in the gutter. And 401(k) plans are losing value.

Are you better off than you were 72 days ago under this President's leadership on the verge of his so-called Liberation Day that is going to drive prices up even more?

He is doubling down on tax cuts for the rich. He wants an economy that works for him, his billionaire donors, his powerful special interests, and it is coming at the expense of working people who are struggling to get by and a lot of programs that they rely on like for their healthcare, like for their Social Security.

He wants an economy where the richest people get the biggest tax cuts with the largest corporations. Heck, they may get to skip out on taxes altogether and where hard-working Americans are getting crushed by rising food prices and rising rents.

This idea that that might trickle down, but we know it doesn't work. He is continuing the same reckless economic approach he used in his first term: massive tax cuts that inure mostly to the wealthy, unchecked spending, rapacious spending, big, big,

big holes in our national debt, trillions of dollars in more debt, and no serious plan on how to pay for any of the things that he is doing, from Social Security to public health to the education that supports children with disabilities and scientific research, the safety nets that millions of people depend upon.

Here is a New York Times: “Trump’s policies have shaken a once-solid economic outlook.” This is from March 7.

President Trump inherited an economy that was, by most conventional measures, firing on all cylinders. Wages, consumer spending and corporate profits were rising. Unemployment was low. The inflation rate, though higher than normal, was falling.

Just weeks into Mr. Trump’s term, the outlook is gloomier. Measures of business and consumer confidence have plunged. The stock market has been on a roller-coaster ride. Layoffs are picking up.

And by the way, this is March 7. We just finished March, the worst performing quarter in years in the stock market.

Back to the article:

Layoffs are picking up, according to some data. And forecasters are cutting their estimates for economic growth this year, with some even predicting that the U.S. gross domestic product could shrink in the first quarter.

Some commentators have gone further, arguing that the economy could be headed for a recession, a sharp rebound in inflation or even the dreaded combination of the two, “stagflation.” Most economists consider that unlikely, saying growth is more likely to slow than to give way to a decline.

Still, the sudden deterioration in the outlook is striking, especially because it is almost entirely a result of Mr. Trump’s policies and the resulting uncertainty. Tariffs, and the inevitable retaliation from trading partners, will increase prices and slow down growth. Federal job cuts will push up unemployment, and could lead government employees and contractors to pull back on spending while they wait to learn their fate. Deportations could drive up costs for industries like construction and hospitality—

And the agricultural sector—that depend on immigrant labor.

“If the economy was starting out in quite good shape, it’s probably in less good shape after what we’ve seen the last few weeks,” said Donald Rissmiller, chief economist at Strategas, a research firm.

The U.S. economy has repeatedly shown its resilience in recent years, and there are parts of Mr. Trump’s agenda that could foster growth. Business groups have responded enthusiastically to Republican plans to cut taxes and reduce regulation. A streamlined government could, in theory, make the overall economy more productive.

So far, however, the Trump administration’s approach to economic policy has been characterized more by chaos—tariffs that are announced and then delayed, government workers who are fired and rehired—than by careful planning.

Michael R. Strain, an economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute—

I know AEI well—

said Mr. Trump’s policies on trade and immigration, and his slash-and-burn approach to federal job cuts, would have a damaging effect.

This is a conservative think tank.

“What President Trump has proposed will not cause a recession,” he continued. “But it will slow economic growth. It will take money out of people’s pockets. It will increase the unemployment rate. It will cost people jobs. It will make American businesses less competitive.”

That is AEI, folks.

It is certainly possible for Mr. Trump’s policies to come together in a way that causes a recession. His tariffs alone could shave a full percentage point off growth in gross domestic product this year, according to some economic models—enough to cut in half the 2 percent growth rate that economists expected going into this year.

Many economists contend that deporting millions of immigrants—as Mr. Trump promised to do on the campaign trail last year—could be even more harmful than tariffs, given the U.S. economy’s need for workers, particularly in industries like construction and health care.

And the administration’s push to shrink the federal government, an effort led by Elon Musk, could leave hundreds of thousands of federal workers and government contractors looking for jobs when hiring has slowed. That could set off a chain reaction: Workers who lose jobs, or worry they might, would pull back on spending, which would force businesses to cut costs, leading to more layoffs and further reductions in spending.

Ordinarily, that would prompt the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates and shore up the economy. But that could be difficult if tariffs are also pushing up prices, making policymakers nervous that cutting interest rates could spur inflation.

“It’s a death by a thousand paper cuts,” said Jay Bryson, chief economist for Wells Fargo. “All these things individually aren’t enough to cause a recession, but if you layer them on top of one another, it might be.”

Most economists think such an outcome is relatively unlikely, however. Mr. Trump has repeatedly delayed full enforcement of his promised tariffs. For example, on Thursday—

This article is from March 7—

he suspended tariffs on most imports from Mexico and Canada until April.

What month are we in? April.

His deportation efforts have likewise gotten off to a slow start. And some of the cuts to the federal workforce have been tied up in court.

As they should be.

Such delays and reversals will help blunt the impact of Mr. Trump’s policies, and could make a recession less likely, at least in the short term. But the prolonged uncertainty could have its own costs, leading businesses to delay investment and hiring decisions.

“If we don’t get clarity by the back half of this year, economic uncertainty can be like a deer in the headlights,” said Nancy Lazar, chief global economist at the investment bank Piper Sandler. “Things just stop. Business confidence is muted, employment is muted, and capital spending is put on hold.”

Even if Mr. Trump’s policies don’t cause a recession, they could do long-term damage. Lower immigration will leave the country with a smaller labor force as the native-born population is aging. Trade barriers will be a relatively modest drag on growth while in place—a chronic condition, rather than an acute one.

“It’s less like the economy is in a car wreck, and it’s more like the economy has decided to start smoking a pack a day,” said Michael Madowitz, an economist at the Roosevelt Institute, a progressive group.

In certain places and for certain groups, the consequences could be harder to ignore. Veterans, who make up a disproportionate share of federal workers, could be particularly hard-hit by government layoffs. So could parts of the country that depend heavily on federal jobs: Already, there are signs that home prices in the Washington metropolitan area are falling.

“It’s going to be substantial for certain communities.”

“When you look at the aggregate,” it is going to be challenging.

Mr. KAINÉ. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I talked or texted with this person who asked me to yield the floor. I have been letting this power go to my head. I have never in the Senate had the ability to hold the floor and leave the person in a little bit of limbo.

I just want to say that TIM KAINÉ is one of the friends. Honestly, he is more like a pastor to me. He is one of the more honorable men I have met in my life and struggles, like me, about faith and public service.

I read your book. I really hope more people read your book. I didn’t think it was going to be as beautiful as it was. I laughed, I wept. When you were attacked by spiders and things like that, I am sorry, I was laughing at your misfortune, sir.

It is a book about you going through your whole State by walking the Appalachian Trail, canoeing. Every story you told moved me. It is a great book. I have read a lot of my colleagues’ books, this one really touched me. You have a beautiful view of America, and I want people to read your book, I really want people to read your book. So if I should yield, I will yield only if you will tell people the name of your book and maybe tell something about it. This is extortion on the Senate floor. I am going to hold on to the floor unless you agree to that. Shake your head up and down if you agree.

All right. Then, of course, to my dear friend and somebody that I probably wouldn’t be standing here, we had some discussions about procedural opportunities and things like that, he had to make some concessions to me, I won’t give details, but he is an honorable man, and in the crux before I came here, he really helped to clear the pathway for me to stand here now. I owe you a lot of my 12 years. You are like a big brother to me.

And I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. KAINÉ. Well, thank you to my friend, Senator BOOKER, and to all who are gathered to watch this very, very important vigil. And the question that I am going to ask in slow motion to give you a chance to think of a response—

Mr. BOOKER. God bless you.

Mr. KAINÉ.—is a question that was inspired by your colloquy with Senator COONS.

Mr. BOOKER. Not a colloquy. That is not allowed. It was a question.

Mr. KAINÉ. Your discussion, where you were doing some Bible quoting

back and forth. And as, you know, I am a big Bible reader. And the thing I thought about, and actually I thought about it during your talk since last night, is this part of the Gospel of Matthew where he is challenging people he thinks are hypocrites.

And he says to them: You can discern the faces of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times.

That is Matthew 16:2 and 3. You can discern the faces of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the time.

The way I viewed this vigil that you have been powerfully engaged upon is you are attempting to discern and explain the signs of the times to your colleagues and to our country, and that is very important that we do.

And I would like to ask you one question about the signs of the times economically to follow the discussion of what we are seeing, but then I want to ask you a question about the signs of the times more in the nature of our democracy.

So to begin, on the economy, you walked through how strong the economy was on the day this President was inaugurated, and 2 months later, the challenges of a volatile stock market, the challenges of rising prices, the challenges of declining consumer confidence, the challenges of predictions that there might be slow growth or even a recession.

We will have a vote on the Senate floor tomorrow about Canadian tariffs based on a resolution that I have introduced that we will have a vote on.

You talked at length about those tariffs and the effects that they have on Americans and others. As I have traveled around my Commonwealth, my farmers, my small businesses, they have seen it before. They saw it in Trump term one. They know how dangerous it will be. They don't want to pay more for groceries. They don't want to pay more for building supplies. Farmers don't want to pay more for fertilizers. My shipyards don't want to pay more for aluminum and steel. They were promised that they would pay less, not pay more.

They don't want to be part of a campaign to demonize a nation that has been a friend of the United States and stood side by side with us in every war since the War of 1812. They don't want to be part of a juvenile assertion by this President that that sovereign nation is the 51st State. They don't want to be part of a name-calling effort to call the prime minister of a sovereign nation Governor. They are trying to read the signs of the times.

Why is this administration that came in with such a strong economic hand doing so much so quickly to both hurt us economically, but also to tarnish a relationship that has stood the test of time with an ally?

The President often says that his goal is "America First." We would all agree as Members of this body in "America First," but we would all passionately disagree with "America Alone."

What is "America Alone" going to get us? What will we turn to, who will we turn to when the allies that we have spent decades building relationships with now feel pushed aside? Yesterday, China announced that they were going to be working with Japan and Korea on a free trade zone, possibly to respond to U.S. tariffs.

Mr. BOOKER. Wow.

Mr. KAINE. Other nations are having to engage in hedging behaviors because they thought we were friends and now they doubt that reality anymore.

And so as you look at the signs of these economic times—and then I will get to a second question about the signs of the times in our democracy—how are we to understand this? And more importantly, how are we best to rectify it?

How can we stand up for our families and reduce their burdens, not increase them? How can we stand shoulder to shoulder with linked arms with our allies to face off against adversaries? Reflect on the signs of the times and point us in the right direction, please?

Mr. BOOKER. I appreciate that. I am going to try to keep it short, but I want to reminisce with you about something that—do you remember in Trump's first term that he used a national security waiver to put tariffs on Canada then?

Mr. KAINE. Yes. Yes. And my citizens really remember because they suffered.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. But do you remember we had a Foreign Relations Committee meeting, and a leader—I don't want to embarrass the leader, but a leader from Canada came, it was a woman, and she sat there. It was a bipartisan group together. You do remember this?

Mr. KAINE. Yes, I do.

Mr. BOOKER. So she sat there, and she started very slowly going back to the War of 1812, and marched through Canadian-American history. I confess I have a degree in history, but I didn't know all this history. But amazing stories of Canadian sacrifice to stand next to Americans, to die next to Americans, to fight for America, to join our artists, our cultural communities, our agricultural communities, all the things we have done hand in hand to make both of our Nations stronger and more prosperous. And then she looked at us and said: And then your President, in a sense, called us a national security threat.

Mr. KAINE. Yep.

Mr. BOOKER. And you all put tariffs on us.

And I remember the quiet, the silence around that committee table. I felt like, whoa, this is such an ally, such a friend, such a consistent ally of us throughout the hardest difficult times in history, never left our side. Her litany was so admirable, and then she looks at us, a national security waiver, hardships on our economy, national security waiver to put tariffs on. And they hurt Americans, and they

hurt—embarrassingly hurt our northern neighbor. But I thought that was bad enough.

And now, what kind of bully are you? What kind of mean spirit do you look at your northern neighbor and say: I am going to call you Governor, not with the title you earned by the people that put you in that office. It is the worst kind of behavior. And nobody calls him out, of our Republican colleagues—not enough of them called it out, I should say.

So we are in, as I read in that article, in an economic crisis.

I question: How long will we wait until more of us join in a chorus to say enough is enough?

I don't know the answers. I don't know how we can stop him. But I know we did in the first term. We pushed back on him successfully and on his attempts to try to take healthcare away from tens of millions of Americans, and we can do it again.

But more people have to do things differently. They have to do like we have been talking about all day—and I will turn to my colleague again—as John Lewis called us: Get in good trouble, necessary trouble. Heal the soul of America.

We have to do more and follow the examples of our forefathers and foremothers who never gave up, with conviction and determination, with indefatigable spirit and unyielding grace that continues, time and time again, pushing back and bending the arc.

It is our turn. What are we going to do? We have to answer that question. We have to do more.

Mr. KAINE. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. KAINE. This is a question about the signs of the times in our democracy. We will celebrate 250 years of American democracy in 2026. And I want it to be a celebration, not a coronation, not a requiem, not a wake, but a celebration.

A week ago Sunday, 250 years ago, Patrick Henry stood on the floor of Henrico Parish, now known as St. John's Episcopal Church, on Church Hill in Richmond, at a moment of decision where people were challenged to understand the signs of the times, at a moment of tyranny. And he asked the immortal question.

And I almost view your vigil as asking the same question about where we would stand in such a moment, and there were different forks in the road—a phrase that has attained some meaning recently. And Patrick Henry said: "As for me, give me liberty or give me death."

You are giving a liberty speech, my colleague. You are giving a liberty speech as the Nation begins to think about 250 years of democracy.

The opposite of liberty, that which Henry was fighting against, was tyranny. It was tyranny. I am one that believes that we should mark anniversaries. We shouldn't just act steady

state, like this country was ordained and will just go on forever regardless. We are coming up on 250 years of American democracy, and there is a live question about its continued existence that this generation is grappling with.

Henry gave that speech at St. John's Church, and a few months later, on July 4, 1776, the United States declared its independence from England, and our history in this new chapter began. And at various points along the way—during the 1850s, say, or during the 1950s—generation shifts like ours have had to grapple with the question of whether the experiment will continue or not.

Some of our national symbols have some unusual aspects to them that point to this experiment. We have a national anthem that ends with a question—not an assertion, not a declaration, but whether the flag will still stand over the home of the free and land of the brave, question mark.

The State flag that Virginia adopted on July 5, 1776, is a most unusual flag. It has a woman representing Roman virtue, standing astride a deposed tyrant whose crown is knocked off, who is holding a broken chain in his hand, and he is lying on the ground. It is one of only six State flags with a woman on it. It is the only State flag that features toplessness, which occasionally creates some racism in schools as students ask about it.

But it is also the flag with the most unique State motto of any State. All States have mottos. Forty-nine States' mottos are positive. "Hope," "Eureka," "Excelsior," "Onward and Upward," "Ad astra per aspera." Michigan has the most unusual positive motto in Latin, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look around you."

I wasn't looking for a peninsula, but I would rather it be pleasant than not.

Virginia's is the only flag and the only State with a motto that is not positive. It is a rebuke: "Sic semper tyrannis." Thus be it always—thus be it ever—to tyrants. George Wythe, Thomas Jefferson's teacher, was in charge of designing the flag and chose that as the motto.

Think about the verb tense, right? It is the only one that is a rebuke, and it has stayed on our State seal and State flag since July 5, 1776. Many State flags have been changed in the last 20 years. Utah changed, Minnesota changed, Mississippi changed, and Georgia changed. Virginia has essentially not changed since 1776.

Neither the figure of virtue standing astride a deposed monarch or the motto, "Sic semper tyrannis"—again, the verb tense, "semper"—always, ever. It is not in the current tense. No tyrants are down with tyrants. It is in the future tense: Thus be it always to tyrants. Thus be it ever to tyrants.

The Virginia flag that we pass by in Virginia every day without thinking about it—it is in every school, and we pass it by. It asks us two questions, 250 years later: Do we retain the ability to recognize tyranny? Do we retain the

virtue to defeat it? Can we recognize tyranny? Can we retain the virtue to defeat it?

My friend, you are standing on the floor in the tradition of Patrick Henry, 250 years later. You are raising a question about liberty and our fidelity to it.

So my question to you would be, what gives you hope that the answer we will give to these questions, as Americans—as those commemorating a quarter millennium of American democracy—what gives you confidence that we will answer these questions in a way that will honor those who came before us?

Mr. BOOKER. I want to answer that question.

I want to, at first, say HAKEEM JEFFRIES is here. Now I am worried because two Brooklynites are shaking hands. I confess, when I had the floor and Schumer was here, it was the only time in my life I could deny him the right to speak on the Senate floor.

I confess to my friend who is part of the X generation—the hip-hop generation—my brother who is part of that transition in American history from the "greatest generation" to baby boomers, that the baby boomers are now seeing leaders emerge that are X generation and millennials. He represents the best of the future.

This question is so good—because you didn't honor your commitment to me and talk about your book.

I want to say I insulted Brooklyn for stealing my Nets. I told the leader—I abused my power to retain the floor, and I told the leader there is only one football team in New York, the Buffalo Bills. The other two are in New Jersey.

I should have reminded the leader that the "Chairman of the Board," who sings "New York, New York" is actually from New Jersey.

I can go on with this litany.

I do want to get back to your very serious question about tyranny. I think many of us have read books like "On Tyranny." We are reading articles, and people are talking about the fears that they have, fears that they have about this document.

You and I have had serious conversations over the last 72 days of Donald Trump's Presidency. How much of the encroachment—I would say "encroachment" is a gentle word—of the separation of powers is happening? We are watching Justices, judges—from Republican appointees to Democratic appointees—trying to stop him from doing things. Which one of our great Bill of Rights amendments, from the freedom of the press—he is doing things to the press that, in my opinion, are bullying them, breaking with traditions that Presidents have done in the past; trying to create a press corps like Putin or Erdogan have, who will only let people in the room who will give obsequious supplications often for the dear leader.

What about the freedom of speech? You and I both know reprehensible

speech is protected. Disappearing people for what they said—Scalia talked very clearly about having rights, even when you are in the country. One of the most conservative Justices said: You have rights.

We are seeing him invoke emergencies.

You have been the leader in our caucus, talking about the absurdities of these emergencies he is doing. He tried to rally this body saying: Don't let this happen.

You talked to me about all of these things.

So what is the limit of tyranny? You and I—and we talked about this with your book. I am trying to get back there.

I told you once, when Skip Gates did my history, that he traced my history back to Virginia. I tried to show you that I have more Virginia legitimacy because my roots go back to 1640 in your State. The Stammers came over, and following down, down, down, then Henrietta Stamper, who my mom still talks about as a relative. John Stamper—and with the chart that Skip Gates gave me, the only thing you could say about John Stamper is that the mother of Henrietta Stamper was "slave woman." Born Henrietta Stamper, they called her on her documents "mulatto" and Stamper fought for her ownership because it would later come out that was his child. These are the traditions in my family.

It is really amazing what Skip Gates did and showed me that I am a direct descendent of slaves and slave owners. I am a direct descendent of a Confederate soldier that was captured in retreat. I am the direct descendent of Native Americans and people who fought in the Creek war to kill Native Americans.

And these traditions in our country, I draw upon all of them. I am proud of all of them. They speak us to. They speak to the complicated history of America.

But perhaps one of the best things I got about this complicated history was a visit to my office by—I don't know if I told the leader this—I am sorry. I am going to return to his question.

I know how busy the leader is. If the leader asks me a question—if he asks—I will yield for a question.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining for the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. Before I ask my question, what a tour de force—you are amazing. It is not only the amount of time that you have spent here on the floor—what strength—but the brilliance of our indictment of this awful administration that is so destroying our democracy; that is taking so much away from working people and the middle class, and at the same time all for tax cuts for the billionaires.

You are amazing. We salute you. America salutes you. All eyes are on you. You are incredible.

Here is my question that is related to what our Republican friends are trying to do to all the things that you have so opposed. So are you aware that while we were here on the floor today, Senate Republicans are declaring that using the current policy baseline is up to LINDSEY GRAHAM, not the Parliamentarian? I believe that this is going nuclear, and it shows how hell-bent they are on giving tax breaks to the rich, even if it goes nuclear, even if it violates all the norms that they have had, even if it breaks all the promises they have made.

Do you agree with me that this is just a move that is so, so against what the traditions of the Senate have been about—but not just the traditions of the Senate—fairness, decency, ability to debate issues fairly? They are afraid to debate them. They are afraid to defend tax cuts for billionaires. They are afraid to admit they are taking away Medicaid from so many Americans. And so they come up with this nuclear option, showing that they don't care anymore about norms, about rules, and even about going nuclear, which the leader—the Republican leader—and all of them said: Oh, no, they are not going to do that. Now they say they are going to do it.

What does the Senator think? Does he agree with me that it is going nuclear? Does he agree with me that is a nasty, vicious, and self-seeking for the billionaires—which is what they are doing—way of proceeding?

Mr. BOOKER. Chuck, I am not 100 percent right now, and you just hit me with stunning news that I can't even think about how to respond right now. I am stunned by that. I wish—if you want to ask me a question, ask me a question. I wish you would explain a little bit more because what you are basically saying to me is that we are not going to go through the Parliamentarian. This is a gimmick that is going to be done to try to break, really, what the Byrd rule requirements of reconciliation are. I am using Senate speak, and I don't think we should use that.

So what they are going to try to say is obscure the impact of reconciliation. They are going to obscure this—the incredible tax cuts, the cost of trillions of dollars to our economy—blowing up our debt. So-called fiscal hawks are going to blow it up. I am stunned by this news.

Mr. SCHUMER. So I am asking the Senator, the great Senator BOOKER, a question.

Mr. BOOKER. I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. Does he agree that this isn't just a blow to the people of America, and it shows that the folks—the people—on the other side are only interested not in playing decent, not in playing fair, not in being honest with the American people, but in taking money from the pockets of working people and the middle class and putting it in the hands of billionaires? Is that

something that this country should just countenance in because it does so much harm to the country? And does it not show what our colleagues are really like and what they are after?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. The answer to the question is yes.

I just want to say that anything further is a breaking of the Senate. In a severe way, it is the breaking of the Senate. Every time you break the Senate like that to do another big nuclear option thing, the next time around, when the pendulum swings—I have been here for 12 years, and I have watched it swing back and forth. There is no going back now.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will the Senator yield for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. SCHUMER. Does the Senator remember that, when this was done in the past, McConnell said they would regret it, and they will regret it sooner than they think? Does the Senator agree that that applies to the Republicans in that they will regret it, and they will regret it sooner than they think?

Mr. BOOKER. I hate to answer the question this way, but America will regret this day. The American people will regret this day. All of us will regret this. All of us will.

Mr. SCHUMER. I hate to bring the Senator bad news, but I am asking him a question, and I needed his answer given how eloquent he has been about what America should be and what America should not be.

So I yield the floor to the Senator.

Mr. BOOKER. You cannot yield the floor because I have the floor, sir. I maintain the floor. This is one of the few times I will be able to get to tell CHUCK SCHUMER what the rules are here.

But I just want to get back to you, and maybe this is a way to get back to you by sharing a story I don't think I have ever told you.

(Mr. CURTIS assumed the Chair.)

It was a few years ago with one of Biden's last State of the Union speeches, and I—we all had to vote on the floor about an hour before the speech, and then we would come back here and assemble to do this extraordinary walk through history.

So, days before that, I was with the leader, HAKEEM, and I was with some other people in the Oval Office with the President.

The President put his arm around me as we finished the meeting, and he said: Hey, CORY.

And I am like: Yes, Mr. President.

I have got a big speech coming up.

I know, Mr. President.

I am going to go to Camp David to work on it.

And I said: OK, Mr. President.

He goes: Can I call you if I need some help?

And I said: Yes. Right, Mr. President. Sure.

And that was it. Over the weekend, he didn't call me for help with his

speech, and we came here and did that vote an hour before, and then—I like walking out that door. Many people know this. If I can, I go straight out the next doors and onto the steps. I love those steps—maybe because I watched "Schoolhouse Rock" as a kid, and that is where there was "Mr. Bill, I am just a bill." So I pause sometimes there and just feel the sense of gratitude and the Supreme Court right in front of me and the Library of Congress, and if you stand in the right place, you can see the gold dome behind you.

As I am standing there in that moment an hour before we have to hustle back here, my phone rings. I answer my phone, and it begins with what I think is one of the top stupidest questions in America. You have gotten this question. I think you would agree with me. You are not the kind of guy who uses words like, "Hey, this is stupid," but this is stupid. The thing I heard—the stupid question—was this: This is the White House operator. Will you hold for the President of the United States?

Who says no to that question as one does when they get a call from the President of the United States?

So I say: Yeah. I will hold. Hold it a minute. I am washing my hair.

I say: Yes, of course.

The next thing you know, it is Joe Biden, and he goes: CORY.

And I go: Mr. President.

He goes: I am struggling with my speech.

And at that point—I know you weren't this kind of student in college, but all of my guilt from my college days of waiting until the last minute to finish a paper was gone. The President of the United States was waiting until the last minute to finish his speech. Heck, I feel good.

And so he goes: CORY, can I read you a section of this speech?

So he read to me a section of the speech where I have a lot of policy depth, and I couldn't believe it. The President of the United States, an hour before his speech, is rehearsing a part of the speech, and then he asks me that immortal question.

You are a married man. You have to give me good advice on how to answer this question. When your spouse looks at you and says, "How do I look?" you are torn between two things—right?—maybe to tell the truth or to tell your spouse what they want to hear.

Tell me what you answer with, but you can't do it now because I have the floor.

And so I take a moment. Am I going to tell the President what I really think of this section or am I going to just say: "Yes, Mr. Leader"?

So I decided that he called me up an hour before his speech. So he really must want my advice. And I gave some hard input. Turn this dial down more. Turn this one to whatever.

And he said: OK, CORY.

And abruptly he is gone.

I go back to the office, and I tell them: I just got a call from the President of the United States, and he asked

for help on his speech. What a crazy life moment while I stood on the steps, like the bill—"I'm just a bill."

Anyway, we get back here, and it is a wonderful moment in the Senate. I don't know if anybody has the privilege of seeing what we do. We all gaggle around those doors. We talk to each other. People think we always fight and yell. That is not the case. Democrats and Republicans merge into this ball of senatorial humanity. Then, when those doors open, I love it because, when you walk out, you walk past THUNE'S office—what used to be the Library of Congress.

You walk past the Old Senate Chamber, where there were some of the greatest debates in American history and violence on that Senate floor with the caning of Sumner.

You walk through the dome and the statue of Lincoln by an 18-year-old woman named Ream, the suffrage leaders, Martin Luther King, Presidents—extraordinary Presidents.

Then you walk past where the old House used to be. And you love this, and I love this—those little gold plates on the floor where Presidents had their desks, exactly where the Presidents had their desks. Most people go in right under the Junipero Serra, California's statue. Under that cross is Lincoln's gold plate—people who were in the House and served as the President. That is not my favorite one, though. It is John Quincy Adams. Why? You know this. He was the only person in American history ever—and it will probably never happen again—where somebody went to the Presidency and came back to the House. He ran for a House seat. He worked at that spot where that desk was until he collapsed and was carried off the floor. He would soon later die. Amazing. Maybe a future President will. Maybe Obama is going to think, you know: I have got to run for the House.

Then you get into that old Chamber, and we sit down; we find our seats. Then, at that great moment—I don't care if you are Republican or Democrat. When that person walks in and says, "The President of the United States of America," I still get that feeling.

Joe Biden comes in, and I think he sets a record for the longest it would take to get from those doors all the way down. Everybody he is talking to. "MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, what's up?" He is just touching everybody. He gets up there, and he gives his speech. Now, you know that this is an aerobic event. You stand up. You sit down. You stand up. You sit down. You have got to get your squats in when you are doing it. Well, the part of the speech he called me on is—and I am sitting down, and I hear my input in the speech.

I don't know if you all noticed, my colleagues, but I was the first person to stand up for that section, and I was looking at SCHATZ: Get up, man. This is the best speech ever given.

It was amazing. I go home. I am kind of buzzing about the whole experience,

and I am lying in bed. Unfortunately, I have my phone on my nightstand, and it goes off. I see a number I don't recognize, but I open it up, and it says:

Senator Booker, this is John Meacham—

The great historian.

Thank you for helping the President of the United States with his speech. You made more of a difference than you will ever know.

And my first thought was, How do I print this out? How do you print out a text? So he gave me his cell phone number, and now, I am going to troll him until this historian comes to my office and finally relents.

He comes, and now, he steps into your domain, my brilliant friend of history. I expressed worry, fear, concern, demagoguery in our land, the rising of tribalism. I dump on him. I am normally a prisoner of hope. I am normally a purveyor of finding your joy even in the toughest of times. And he listens for a while, and then—and then—and then he looks at me and says:

Cory, there is nothing about this time that is unprecedented. It is all preceded. You want to talk about demagoguery?

And he goes through every generation of Americans having extraordinary demagogues. I read Margaret Chase Smith's incredible speech on this floor against a demagogue and the demagoguery even within her own party. He talked about the No. 1 radio show in all of America that the majority of Americans listen to and its anti-Semitic screeds.

Mr. KAIN. Father Coughlin.

Mr. BOOKER. Father Coughlin.

He went through them all, and he said: Do you want a big worry?

He said that there was an American general in the Depression. He said his name, but I am forgetting it now. I am not at my best. He said that this guy was calling for a military takeover of our democracy. Do you want to talk about authoritarianism? He talked about a Senator here on the left, Huey Long, who was calling for the people to storm the Capitol.

He went through this all, and he said: Every single time, Nazis were in Manhattan at Madison Square Garden. I couldn't believe it. It was unbelievable. I wish people were there listening to this guy as he went through of all these times when America was at a crossroads, when we came upon a moral moment, and he said: What happened as to how we chose the right path? When people were trashing this document or treading on it or undermining it, when demagogues rose to the highest points of popularity in our land, how did we stop it?

Well, he looked at me with some sympathy and said: Not you guys. Not a Senator.

It was that the better majority of American people said: Enough. They chose to define the soul of our country. He gave that phraseology to our President, and he said the soul of America is not the people in office; it is the every-

day citizens who choose the better angels of their nature, who choose right over wrong, who recognize a moral moment and know that they have to stand up and bend the arc of the moral universe or, more importantly, steer the ship of our state out of the troubled waters into the clear, open sea.

I rose here—and I have gotten into lots of questions with my colleagues. But I rose, hoping to have reborn more of the stories of as many Americans as I could, and during the night, my friend CHRIS MURPHY and I read a lot of them.

You know me well, my friend. You know the truth of all of us in this place. You know the truth of everybody. We are all mountain ranges. We all have peaks, and we all have valleys. You, my friend, have seen my valley. You have seen me at my worst. I have failed as a leader at times or at least have come up short for my own personal expectations. You have seen me at some of my better moments.

I know we have obligations. I know people are right to be upset or be demanding of us right now. Please help us. What are you doing in the face of people who might make it so that we might not have elections or might make it so that we do break things in this government that can never be fixed?

One of the speakers who came into our caucus was one of the people who wrote the book "How Democracies Die." Great nations, great civilizations that forget democracy don't necessarily die from external threats. They die from internal corruption. Think of the Roman Empire. Think of the Soviet Empire. It crumbled from its own corrupted failure to live up to its promises and ideals.

We are at this moment. I am here to tell you, America, and to tell my friends and colleagues and anybody who cares to listen to a Senator from New Jersey that we are at that moment. We are past that moment. Every day, things are happening. In the 72 days of this administration, God, if there is not enough to upset you, to ignite you, to realize that maybe you and your family are not getting hurt but other Americans are. Our veterans are. Our seniors are. We have told their stories here. Over these last 21 hours, 22 hours, we have told their stories.

People are getting hurt. People are afraid. People are worried. People I don't even agree with are getting disappeared. Law firms that I have known for my entire career—for my entire career—are being forced to kowtow to this President. Universities that should be the bastions of free speech, free thought, free enterprise, intellectual research, academic research, scientific research are getting torn up by cutting indirect costs. I have read stories of Ph.D. programs that are virtually being canceled, and from the best scientific minds not being able to build the state-of-the-art labs.

The country that has led humanity in scientific invention is taking a blow.

And Fareed Zakaria—I have read his article here, and he is saying that China is doubling down in investments in the universities as this President is cutting them—unless, of course, you come to the leader and make all of these commitments and meet all of these demands. There should be enough already. It should be enough already.

So this is that moment John Meacham told me about. I want to try in the Senate—I know my colleagues—I see TAMMY BALDWIN; I see CHRIS MURPHY; I see ANGELA ALSOBROOKS. I love you guys. I served side by side with you. I know your passion. I have heard your anger. I heard your fear. I heard how you want to fight for this country, but we are not enough.

We can do demonstrations, we can do demands, we can try to do things differently. In fact, we must.

Ms. BALDWIN. Will the Senator yield—

Mr. BOOKER. I will definitely yield to TAMMY BALDWIN, my friend and my colleague.

Ms. BALDWIN.—for another question?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very much. I don't have that much gas in the tank, but hold on, let me say it right.

I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. BALDWIN. So noted.

Senator, since you have taken the floor, which I suppose is nearly a full day now, there have been new breaking news of mass firings. Perhaps others have come to the floor to talk about it. But you were just talking about how great democracies are shredded, sometimes from within.

Look, one of the pieces of breaking news today was the mass firing of our Nation's public health Agency within it. Today, it was reported that the Health and Human Services Department began firing up to 10,000 more people—more than the previous firings—including researchers, scientists, support staff, and senior leaders.

These are people who are doing work to keep our children safe from preventable illnesses and researchers who are searching for cures and treatments for diseases that plague our families, like cancer and diabetes and Alzheimer's.

Look, we can all agree that government could be and should be more efficient. But here is where I disagree with the unelected Elon Musk and people like our President. People stopping the spread of measles—

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. BALDWIN.—researchers finding cures for Alzheimer's disease are not waste, fraud, or abuse.

The slash-and-burn that is being led by Elon Musk's DOGE will make Americans less healthy, less safe. And Elon Musk's DOGE and Donald Trump are callously ripping away treatments, cures from millions of Americans suffering from Alzheimer's disease, cancer, ALS, and other devastating diseases.

Behind these cures are, of course, workers, and they are some of our Nation's brightest and best and most devoted. They keep our Nation healthy and our economies running. But this administration is not respecting their work, their mission.

And I have to point out the why. What is the why to all of their actions today, where it was announced that they are starting that slashing of 10,000 workers within the Department of Health and Human Services—by the way, with more in store because last week, they announced a reorganization that would result in 20,000 people losing their jobs. But what is the why?

Ripping the rug out from under cancer and Alzheimer's disease and ALS patients is all in service of finding the money that Elon Musk and Donald Trump need to cut taxes for themselves and billionaires like them, and, yes, big corporate tax breaks. They are cutting cancer cures for corporate tax breaks.

Senator BOOKER, these cuts to Health and Human Services are going to crush families in Wisconsin, whether it be people not having hope for a cure, for a disease, or to the workers who are doing this groundbreaking research all across the United States who are going to be fired.

In New Jersey, what will these firings mean for the people who you represent?

Mr. BOOKER. I am so grateful for the question because that is what we said we are here about. We are here to try to elevate the voices of people affected by what they are doing to our government. And, frankly, as they cut the Department of Education completely or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, they are getting rid of Agencies that were created by Congress, and many people are right to believe they can't be eliminated without congressional action.

We were talking before with people here that the biggest plurality of people being laid off from all of these Departments are our veterans.

Again, I am going to be back in New Jersey this weekend. I am going to try to be at a rally, a townhall. I know everywhere I go in my State, I am going to hear from people who are rightfully angry, who are rightfully afraid, who are affected by this, who are fearful of what is to come. These are such important human emotions.

But the question, then, is going to be for all of us, and I know people will be questioning me: What are we going to do? What can I do? What are you going to do, Senator?

So I don't have a brilliant response. I don't have some prescient idea that we are going to be able to change the course of this. But I know we are going to fight.

I want to be honest with you. I wasn't sure we could stop Donald Trump when he tried to take down the ACA. I just wasn't sure. I really wasn't. I did not know how that was going to

end. People gasped—do you remember that—in this room.

Ms. BALDWIN. I remember that.

Mr. BOOKER. People gasped. We did not know. This room usually has very predictable actions. That is why I am still standing here, because I didn't want the predictable. I didn't want business as usual to happen. It is rare that we have unpredictability on this floor. It is usually finely orchestrated. You know and I both know this.

But that day, no one expected that or at least wasn't sure. It was drama. It was a moment. And we won.

I want to tell you this. I said this earlier, when I say "we won," I don't think there is one Senator here or the 99 others who convinced John McCain of his vote. I know who did, though, Arizonans who stood up, who spoke up, and demanded more from their leadership not to hurt people, not to hurt folks who needed that healthcare, not to hurt folks with preexisting conditions, not to hurt children.

So I am one of these people who wants to learn from our history. I want to stand here today and tell you I am going to do everything I can. I am willing to go to some lengths. But I am inadequate. You are inadequate. We are Senators with all of this power, but in this democracy, the power of the people is greater than the people in power. This is a moral moment that more Americans need to stand up and say: Enough is enough.

I am sorry, the civil rights movement wasn't won because of just a few Black folks who stood up and were really articulate. No. They called to the consciences of this country, and the country responded. It was a Rainbow Coalition that said this ain't who we are in America.

I know New Jerseyans are hurting. I know. I have been to your State. I love your State. We had some fun in your State together.

Ms. BALDWIN. We sure did.

Mr. BOOKER. We saw young artists, business people. You are this person who says these words over and over again, more than any Republican or Democrat: "Buy American, buy American"; and created so many jobs in your State.

We were in some packed restaurant. People packed not to see me as a special guest but to listen to your story. You are a trailblazer, too, in the Senate. You are doing things that our Founders did not expect, and you know that.

And you want to stand up. I heard you in our caucus, I heard you in SCHUMER's leadership meeting stand up for people who are most marginalized, most looked down on, most talked about. I hear you, TAMMY.

Ms. BALDWIN. Will the Senator respond to another question?

Mr. BOOKER. I won't respond to a question. I am going to read this for the 75th time.

I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. BALDWIN. Thank you, Senator BOOKER.

You just talked about your visit to Wisconsin. You have had many. But there was one that you are talking about that I remember really well and really fondly.

I had the privilege of hosting you and showing you what our State had to offer.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. BALDWIN. Something that I likely bragged about then, like I often do, is that the Badger State is known for making things.

While I know you don't indulge in all of the things that we do make because, of course, we have our iconic products, like beer and brats and cheese, but we also build motorcycles and big industrial ships and engines that power our Navy, and so much more.

Mr. BOOKER. People give a ship.

Ms. BALDWIN. That is right. Make one, too, build them.

Mr. BOOKER. Make them, too, yes.

Ms. BALDWIN. And, of course, behind it all is our workers, as you were just talking about. And whether they are in a marsh harvesting cranberries—we are No. 1 in cranberry production.

Mr. BOOKER. We are in the top 5 in New Jersey.

Ms. BALDWIN. I know, but we are No. 1—not that I am competitive here.

Or whether we are on a foundry floor or whether that worker is on an assembly line, workers are what make our economy go round. And so, naturally, they are the ones we should be prioritizing in all of our policy. But that is not what this administration is doing. They are going to get a slap across the face when the administration slaps across-the-board tariffs and gets us into a trade war.

Mr. BOOKER. Yes.

Ms. BALDWIN. And it is going to be these workers who pay the price.

Wisconsinites are really worried about what we are going to see this week. They are worried about their businesses. You met so many of them when I hosted you. Their livelihoods, their communities, they worried because we have all been here before.

Wisconsin was one of the hardest hit States by retaliatory tariffs last time Donald Trump started a trade war. During Donald Trump's last trade war, American farmers lost \$27 billion in export sales. And according to further records, Wisconsin's agricultural economy exported more than \$3 billion worth of product sales. And our manufacturing economy in Wisconsin, well, it exported about \$26 billion in manufactured products.

And do you know what? The exports that Wisconsin manufacturers make is supported by more than 460,000 jobs, and our agricultural economy is supported by 350,000 jobs. So a trade war would be devastating to the workers of Wisconsin.

Then the prices—people have been struggling with the high price of things in grocery stores, gas stations. A num-

ber of our business leaders have spoken out about the impending tariffs. AriensCo in Brillion, WI, that makes outdoor equipment like snow blowers, told Reuters news that policy whiplash in this arena is making it difficult to plan, especially as price hikes are likely in the works.

And Roden Echo Valley in West Bend told one of our media outlets, WTMJ4:

I don't like this tariff business. It is going to be on the backs of farmers because we have to depend on the world to export our commodities.

He highlighted the dependency of the dairy industry on global trade, noting that 15 to 20 percent of dairy products are exported. I quote again:

And if we lose 15 percent of our markets for dairy, it is going to be absolutely devastating.

We have seen this before, again, in service to a big tax break for billionaires and corporations.

But to my esteemed colleague from New Jersey, thank you for visiting the State of Wisconsin. I want to ask what the impact would be in New Jersey? What would President Trump's tariffs mean for the workers of the Garden State?

Mr. BOOKER. I love that you focused it there because that is who President Trump made promises to, in my State, that things are bad with this economy because it is not serving people who are working every day. He promised that he would make things better.

I will make grocery prices go down—he said that. So people were expecting that is where he would focus. They didn't think he would focus on Greenland. They didn't think he would focus on the Gulf of Mexico. They didn't think he would focus on bullying Canada. They didn't think he would focus on turning his back on Ukraine. They didn't think he would focus on gutting the Department of Education and ending it.

This is not the reason why people voted for him. They did something that Reverend WARNOCK calls—that vote is a sort of prayer. He says it is like a civic prayer: that I am putting a prayer out there that you will be who I hope you can be; you will be a blessing to my life and not a burden.

But you are talking about the burdens that he is bringing. This economy, under 72 days, has not gotten better for working Americans. And they don't even see the President trying to make it better; they see what he is doing to make it worse. And one of the things is going to be these tariffs, which are going to raise costs on working Americans.

Then we—what CHUCK SCHUMER said to me is sounding like, it is going to just sail through—a plan that is going to blow trillions of dollars of holes to our budget, give trillions of dollars of tax cuts to the wealthiest, and gut your Medicaid and gut your services for your grandparents in nursing homes.

People believe. People put their trust. I don't blame them. They are my

fellow Americans. They wanted for their families—they wanted an America that was more affordable. They wanted America to be first, prioritized. They wanted a safer America, a stronger America, a more prosperous America. I heard that.

So when I am back home this weekend, I know that I am going to encounter a lot of folks who are workers in my State who are getting hurt. They want better. They want better from their government.

So the burden upon us and each other is: What are we going to do? Are we going to do the same old thing over and over again or are we going to try to do things differently? Are we going to be willing to, again, get in good trouble, necessary trouble to try to save the soul of this Nation?

I think my colleague, my dear sister, my prayer partner, my soul lifter—I thought I heard you say something?

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Yes. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Ah, yes, I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. I, first of all, want to thank you so much again, Senator BOOKER, on your spiritual obedience. And I think it is necessary for me to say as well today to you, on behalf of so many of us who are watching right now, how extraordinarily proud we are of you.

I would dare say that you are in so many ways our ancestors' dream and how powerful it is for all of us who are watching to recognize that, in this very Chamber where you are standing today, 67 years after this podium was used, for the 24 hours—you have used the podium that was used to block the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

Today, you have taken over the podium, sacrificed your own comforts. You have suffered over 22 hours to stand here today to talk instead about the greatness of America and to speak about it in such a way that reveals the love you feel for our country, and we thank you for that.

This country needs right now bravery. It needs leaders who are unafraid to stand up and speak truth to power, to not hold back from calling out these callous and inhumane acts that are perpetrated by this President against the American people.

When I talk about the American people, we know who we are talking about: against our veterans, against our seniors, against our children, from every corner of our country. I want to talk specifically today about our children.

Mahatma Gandhi noted that the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. This President is failing America's children, and he is doing so by harming our education system.

We remember as well very fondly when Nelson Mandela said:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

I think many of us recognize that is exactly why we are seeing all of the attacks we have seen on this system, because we recognize that education allows us to change the world.

Last Friday, Secretary McMahon shut yet another critical lifeline off to our States and our schools, canceling extensions that the Department had previously granted to States to draw down their COVID relief money.

States like Maryland originally got extensions to finish spending the remainder of these critical dollars on long-term projects like teacher recruitment, tutoring, and other services for students. We know in particular Anne Arundel Public Schools bought Chromebooks for students with their funds. But Maryland still has a remaining escrow balance of nearly \$150 million—\$150 million. That is on top of the millions that have already been clawed back, frozen, or withheld from the State by this administration. These are funds that districts like ours from all across the country were using for school construction projects and mental health support for students.

This administration is refusing to acknowledge the lasting effects of the pandemic on our Nation's students, cruelly stripping educational opportunities from our students and leaving our States and our districts on the hook. So let me be clear that these are dollars that Congress authorized, dollars that have already been allocated, dollars that have already been earmarked by Maryland and our local districts for projects that will help all of our students.

Our schools planned and committed these funds in good faith—in good faith. Our States have acted in good faith, and this administration is acting in bad faith, pulling the rug out from underneath them, blowing a hole in their education budgets.

Our Governor had this to say:

The clawback of these previously committed funds would place an undue burden on our school systems and undermine our collective efforts to strengthen education across the state.

This is only the latest attack on public education by this administration, the latest attack on our schools and our students, the latest attack on our teachers.

We saw this administration attack HBCUs by freezing funds for the 1890 Scholars Program, which provides tuition for students at our land grant institutions.

We saw this administration and Secretary McMahon slash teacher training grants, which help prepare our educators to serve our communities.

We saw this administration proposing to move the student loan program to the Small Business Administration, threatening students' access to aid and the promise of higher education.

We saw this Secretary and this administration lay off half of the staff at the Department of Education several weeks ago, firing over 1,300 staffers.

I want to talk for a minute about who the Department fired. By the way, these are people who were not incompetent. These are people who are not DEI. These are professionals, well educated. The administration fired civil servants at the Department's Office for Civil Rights and shuttered Office for Civil Rights regional offices, including the regional office that handles discrimination cases.

I want to make really clear—and I want the American people to hear this—what decimating the Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights means. OCR attorneys intervene when schools ignore complaints from students who are repeatedly called racial slurs or who are subjected to hateful speech or imagery, like swastikas, on campus. It provides the technical assistance that schools need to train staff on anti-harassment practices, combat harmful behaviors, and build welcoming environments. And it holds K through 12 schools and colleges that fail to keep students safe accountable.

It ensures that families have recourse if their child with a disability is not being served appropriately by their district; that if a child is not getting the speech therapy or other services outlined in their individualized education program, that they will have an advocate to help them.

At the time that this administration took over, there were over 270 open Office for Civil Rights cases, impacting 1.3 million students in my State alone. Without enough OCR staff to do the job, investigators' caseloads will grow to an untenable level.

So we spoke to some of the lawyers that work in the division that serves Maryland schools, and all of these patriotic civil servants—all they want to do is do their jobs. They want to combat discrimination in our schools. They want to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. And these civil servants don't know that that mission is possible, as they and so many of their colleagues are ruthlessly fired by this administration.

These cuts are catastrophic. I dare say that they, like so many other decisions by this administration, are wicked.

So, Senator BOOKER, here is my question: What are you hearing from families in the State of New Jersey as this administration dismantles the Department of Education and slashes opportunities for students and families?

Mr. BOOKER. I am so grateful for the question from my friend—and that is the centering that we have been trying to do—which is, What are families around New Jersey and America thinking?

As you said, the Department of Education—we read that earlier today—it doesn't dictate educational policy of the States, but it does do a lot to provide funding for special needs kids in the States. So I am already hearing

from parents of kids with special needs regarding the impact it will have if those resources are cut, everything from programs that help young people afford college, to programs that I have worked with people that help schools afford advanced scientific equipment so the bright minds, the geniuses of our State and the country, can have the equipment they need.

This administration is cutting things that are hurting families, and we are hearing from them. We are hearing from veterans. We are hearing from the elderly.

We are hearing from people who are taking care of the elderly. We are hearing from people who run our hospitals.

We are hearing from people who run our universities and who talk about the science funding and the cutting of Ph.D.s.

We are hearing from people who rely on Medicare and Medicaid, who rely on Social Security.

We are hearing from people that are appalled that their Nation bullies smaller nations like Canada or Greenland.

We are hearing from people that are shocked at what they are doing to the most vulnerable people who come to our Nation, who have American children or an American spouse, who are being disappeared off of our streets, who have no criminal record.

We are hearing from people that don't think it is right that a President should have a meme coin that allows him to enrich himself, to hawk his power and position for even greater wealth.

So I have done everything I can, and I am going to do more—I still have a little gas in the tank—to elevate those voices, to elevate those voices.

Mr. KELLY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Before I yield, because I just keep wanting to exercise this power that I might have for a little while longer and exercise it over a man that I have a real chip on my shoulder for—the Senator from Arizona. Yeah, he has been a military fighter pilot. He has been an astronaut. He has been out of this world.

But what ticks me off, sir—I have said nice things about everybody else, but I am not saying them about you, sir, because when I go home through New Jersey and I walk through my airport—I was the Newark mayor—I see your big bald head up and a big, big picture of you saying “New Jersey Hall of Fame, MARK KELLY.”

Who the heck am I? You are the Senator from Arizona, but yeah, yeah—you are right, OK—he was a great, celebrated military veteran and astronaut who grew up in New Jersey, who went to high school in West Orange, whose parents were cops. So you have the accolades in my State, and I am proud of that. I am proud I get to serve with you.

I still have the floor. Stop trying to speak. There are rules in this place.

Don't make me sic the Parliamentarian or the Presiding Officer—thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

Mr. KELLY. Senator, my apologies.

Mr. BOOKER. Well, with that kind of deference, I now will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. KELLY. My apologies for my giant mug at your airport.

Mr. BOOKER. Where you overshadow me, literally.

Mr. KELLY. As Senator BOOKER knows, I did grow up in the State of New Jersey, and growing up in New Jersey, I came from a very working-class family. My family didn't have a lot of money. My dad was a cop. He was a union member. From my earliest days of remembering my mom going to work, she started out as a waitress. And I remember those days, after working these night shifts at these banquets, how tired she was. She would work some long hours.

Then she became a secretary, but she also would work as a waitress at the same time. This was just to make ends meet.

Eventually, my mother decided that she wanted to become a police officer like my dad, but this was New Jersey in the 1970s, and for a woman to become a cop, it was really, really hard. It was practically unprecedented. My mom had to take a written test and then a physical fitness test.

The physical fitness test, it was designed for men. Part of this test required that my mom climb over this 7-foot 2-inch wall. Now, my mother was all of about 4 feet 13 inches tall. To help my mom out in passing this test, my dad built a replica of this wall made out of a door between two pine trees in our backyard.

He didn't tell her he made it an inch higher at 7 feet 3 inches, and I would watch my mom go out there after dinner every night and try to get over this thing. Initially, she couldn't reach to the top, and when she finally could, she would usually just fall off into the dirt.

But my mom, she wasn't one to give up. Eventually, she was able to get over this thing, but it took her a long time. She practiced for months.

And when she finally took this test, instead of getting over in the required 9 seconds, she got over in 4½, much faster than almost all the men. My mom became one of the first female police officers in Northern New Jersey.

She kept that job for a long time until eventually she was injured. And by the way, it was the union that protected her rights after being injured on the job. But I remember how this job changed our lives economically.

Both of my parents having good-paying union jobs, it meant more money coming in the door, more money for our family, more money to play sports. It was part of what allowed my brother and me to chase our American dream, to serve in the U.S. Navy and, eventually, both of us as astronauts in NASA.

We were able to do that because our parents worked hard, and they sac-

rificed for us. Because of the support we had, including some really good public schools—that is harder today for a lot of families, including the school part, by the way.

I hear from so many folks in Arizona who feel like they are working harder and harder, and they just are not getting ahead. The cost of groceries and gas and housing—especially housing—makes these folks feel like they are just running in place. It shouldn't be that way.

Elon Musk and Donald Trump, they are making it worse. Trump's tariffs are going to jack up prices on nearly everything that families rely on: Groceries; rent; cars; housing.

They are even trying to do away with the Department of Education. Now, how is that going to help kids get a good education? If they are successful, their plan to gut Medicaid in order to pay for a giant tax cut for rich people, it is going to be even tougher for hard-working Americans, hard-working New Jerseyans and Arizonans to get ahead and achieve their American dream.

So as a fellow kid from New Jersey, and I never expected—never expected—that tax cuts for rich people would potentially kill the American dream of kids all over this country, but it could.

And as a kid—you, Senator BOOKER, growing up in New Jersey—I am interested to hear what was your American dream and why—why—would these giant tax cuts make that kind of dream harder?

Mr. BOOKER. I appreciate a New Jersey Hall of Fame member, the only one in the U.S. Senate—I appreciate his question.

I appreciate the service of his parents, out there every day putting their heart and soul into serving the community in a dangerous job where you often see people at their worst.

I said this earlier, James Baldwin said:

Children are never good at listening to their elders, but they . . . never fail to imitate them.

You are living up to the example your parents set in so many ways.

Then you go and pull something off that really makes me jealous is you are one of the guys in the Senate that probably most married up.

We are both are Jersey boys. We both grew up there in grade schools and high schools. We both know those teachers that did so much for us, that coached sports. They taught us. I am going back for a funeral for a great man in New Jersey, Ed Koehler, this weekend, who was one of the greater influences in my life in high school, and you know how much people invested themselves.

I remember learning Little League from a guy that would come back from working at a gas station, a parent of another kid. I still remember his big thick hands teaching us how to hold a bat. This guy is working a job at a gas station and rushes home to teach his kid Little League and treated me—the only Black kid—like one of his own kids.

Special communities, special heritage, special culture that we share—this is the Jersey culture. We got a chip on our shoulders. We are tough. We are strong. We are proud.

And a lot of New Jersey is watching. Thousands of letters and emails and phone calls from all over New Jersey. ANDY KIM and I are hearing from so many people, and they are afraid. They are angry. They are worried. They don't understand why they are going after our Social Security programs, cutting benefits by cutting so many employees and cutting the service people get.

They don't understand why they are seeing veterans being laid off from their government jobs. They don't understand why Social Security is being called a Ponzi scheme. The President of the United States is making up lies.

They don't understand why veterans and Medicaid and Medicare—there are so many things that are making people worry. I am hearing their letters, and they are praying we stop some of these things like \$880 billion dollars' worth—and the question is, Why? Why are we doing this?

We are doing this—and they are saying it is to extend or make permanent the Trump tax cuts, the overwhelming disproportionate benefit that went to the wealthiest amongst us, the wealthy corporations.

So Trump's economy in the first 72 days is pretty bad because of his reckless chaotic behavior: Prices are up. Inflation is up. The stock market had its worst quarter in 2, 3 years.

Consumer confidence is down. And now we are going to see tariffs tomorrow, which are going to further drive up prices, create more chaos.

Trump squandered the progress we were making on the economy. He tanked the market, jacked the prices. Is it any surprise that Americans are feeling more pessimistic, as I said, with consumer confidence going down? And what is his first major legislative push? This is what we are talking about, my colleague, my friend, my fellow New Jerseyan: His first big legislative push in this body is not to help families.

No plan to lower costs. That is what he said he would do. Is his first legislation coming here while lowering costs? No. Is it any relief for seniors? Is it some big idea like we did to lower prescription drug costs? No, that is not what he is doing.

Is his first priority helping our veterans? What is his first priority? As I said, it is extending the 2017 Trump tax cuts, a multitrillion dollar giveaway that slashed corporate taxes and overwhelmingly benefited the wealthy and left the middle class with crumbs, relative crumbs.

He and his allies promised that the benefits would trickle down to workers. That is what we heard. It would "pay for itself," he said.

But in 2022, the Fed and the Joint Committee on Taxation confirmed the truth: 90 percent of workers—90 percent of folks in our States saw no benefit. Now Trump and his GOP allies

want to double down with even bigger tax cuts that will increase the deficit by over \$4.5 trillion, a majority of which would go to the wealthiest people.

Let me read what the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities—how they described the plan.

Here is a quote:

Following a presidential campaign in which Donald Trump promised to improve the economic circumstances of working families, House Republicans are instead pushing to extend all expiring provisions of the costly 2017 tax law—which are heavily skewed to people with high incomes—and add new tax cuts on top. The Republican-controlled House passed a budget resolution on February 25 authorizing \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts through 2034 and calling on committees to partially offset the cost with \$2 trillion in cuts; these cuts will inevitably hit programs such as Medicaid and SNAP, which help millions of families afford essential needs.

Are they cuts to the wealthiest? No.

These cuts will inevitably hit programs such as Medicaid and SNAP, which help millions of families afford essential needs.

Extending the expiring tax cuts for individuals and large estates would double down on the flaws in the 2017 law by:

Giving the biggest benefits to the wealthy. Households with incomes in the top 5 percent, who have incomes over around \$320,000, would receive roughly half of the benefits.

So billionaires above that, altogether, they would receive roughly half of the benefits.

Ballooning the deficit. Along with the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts enacted under President Bush, the 2017 law has severely eroded our nation's revenue base. The House budget would compound the damage, adding hundreds of billions of dollars to deficits each year. Extending the 2017 tax cuts would cost \$3.6 trillion through 2034.

Failing to significantly boost economic growth, workers' earnings, or other benefits for workers [would not be seen.] The trickle-down benefits that proponents claimed the 2017 law would produce never materialized, and the law hasn't come close to paying for itself.

As I heard on the Senate floor from my colleagues, they said: Oh, this is going to pay for itself; oh, this is going to pay for itself.

Yet the House budget claims that extending the tax cuts would generate trillions in revenue—far more than any independent estimate.

As in 2017, an alternative path is available. Congress should work toward creating a fairer federal tax system that raises more revenues from wealthy people and corporations and supports high-value investments that expand opportunity and promote shared prosperity.

During the 2017 debate, Trump Administration officials and prominent proponents claimed the tax law would yield broadly shared benefits by boosting economic growth. President Trump's Council of Economic Advisers claimed the centerpiece corporate tax rate cut would “very conservatively” lead to a \$4,000 boost in household income.

What a lie.

But research to date has failed to find evidence that the gains from the corporate rate cut trickled down to most workers.

Surprise, surprise, surprise.

A study by economists from the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Federal Re-

serve Board found that workers below the 90th percentile of their firm's income scale—a group whose incomes were below roughly \$114,000 in 2016—saw no change in earnings from the rate cut.

Proponents' claims that the tax cuts would pay for themselves haven't panned out either. In fact, a study by economists from Harvard, Princeton, the University of Chicago, and the Treasury Department estimates that the law's total corporate tax cuts—the rate cut as well as full expensing for capital investments and international tax changes—reduced revenue by roughly 98 cents for every dollar of tax cuts, even after accounting for increases in economic activity due to those cuts.

Similarly, proponents argued the law's 20 percent deduction for pass-through businesses (partnerships, S corporations, and sole proprietorships) would boost investment and create jobs. Then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, for example, argued the deduction would “be good for the economy; good for growth.” But researchers have found no evidence that it provided any significant boost in economic activity and little evidence that it increased investment or broadly benefited workers, other than the owners themselves.

Despite this underwhelming performance, the House Republican budget resolution assumes that enacting \$4.5 trillion in new or extended tax cuts will produce enough additional economic growth to generate an extra \$2.6 trillion in revenue through 2035.

They think it is going to offset the tax cuts.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget has derided this claim as “fantasy math,” noting that it is many times greater than even the most optimistic independent estimate.

They lied to us, or at least just put out really expansive hope in the past, and none of it came true. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool the American people twice, well, we should not let it happen.

This idea in this country that if you make the wealthiest more wealthy by giving them more tax cuts and deny services to our veterans, deny healthcare to our seniors, cut Social Security benefits, cut scientific research, cut programs that protect people's safety and security, that that is going to somehow help our Nation to prosper as a whole, you are kidding yourselves. We have the evidence. We have the analysis.

And this is the crazy thing, as I heard from CHUCK SCHUMER, the Republicans are now trying to hide the true cost of their billionaire tax cuts with accounting gimmicks.

The New York Times interviewed budget experts from across the political spectrum to shed light on the Republicans' trickery. And this is the article I want to read. I know some people have questions, but I want to read this article because SCHUMER shook me. Shook me.

So here is the New York Times. The title of the article is “The Budget Trick the G.O.P Might Use to Make \$4 Trillion Tax Cuts Look Free.”

How much does a tax cut cost? It depends on what you compare it to.

Republicans in Congress trying to advance a giant bill that includes \$4 trillion in tax

cut extensions are considering a novel strategy that would make the extension appear to be free money. The trick: Budgeting with the assumption that current policies extend indefinitely into the future—even those with an expiration date, like the 2017 tax cuts set to end next year. It's the difference between making the extension appear to cost \$4 trillion.

Which is the true cost, or hiding it and saying it costs nothing.

Using this “current policy baseline” wouldn't change the bill's real effect on deficits or debt. But it would make it easier to actually make the tax cuts lasting by sidestepping a rule governing budget reconciliation, the process Republicans are using to pass the bill.

Yes, this sounds technical! That's why we've enlisted some of Washington's top budget veterans to explain this maneuver using a metaphor. Across the ideological spectrum, nearly all of the more than 20 experts we heard from disliked changing the baseline.

And CHUCK SCHUMER just came in here and said the Republicans have already decided they are going to do it. This is outrageous.

But here the New York Times interviewed across the ideological spectrum, whole bunch of experts from the center, from the right, from the left, and let's hear what they are saying about this gimmick.

“If budget reconciliation is like taking the express lanes on a highway (there's extra rules and tolls, limited stops, but it gets you to where you want to go faster), using a current policy baseline for taxes is like slapping a fake license plate on your car.” Zach Moller, Director of the economic program at Third Way, which describes itself as a “center-left” research group.

They don't like this gimmick. They think it is fakery.

Here is another person using an analogy:

“It's like taking an expensive week-long vacation and then assuming you can spend an extra \$1,000 per day forever since you are no longer staying at the Plaza.” Marc Goldwein, Senior vice president and senior policy director for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan group that tends to be hawkish on deficits.

Here is another person, Jessica Reidl, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute—I have worked with them in the past—a conservative research group, and the chief economist for the former Republican Senator Ron Portman of Ohio.

“Last year, despite being deeply in debt, I bought a \$100,000 sports car. So next year, buying another \$100,000 car is not irresponsible because I am merely spending the same amount of money as the year before. And if I purchase “only” a \$70,000 car, then I should be congratulated for reducing my annual spending by \$30,000.”

A conservative think tank is basically calling this a hoax and a lie. Lying to yourself, that if I keep spending, spending, spending the same amount I kept spending, spending, spending to drive up the costs, then I am just doing the same thing I have done before, so it is not adding.

Well, it is adding. There is no way to not call what the Republicans are trying to do a gimmick that is trying to

hide the truth that they are going to add trillions of dollars to the deficits that we, that our children, that our children's children are going to have to pay for.

The debt payments alone to service the debt are going to be bigger than any of the programs we think we should be investing in like science research or education or affordable childcare, or lowering prescription drug costs, or expanding the child tax credit. Things that we know if we invest in, we will get some returns.

But, no, what they are investing in is bigger tax cuts for the wealthiest. Conservatives, independents, left-leaning folks all come to the same conclusion.

Pretending \$4 trillion in tax cuts will cost nothing may not be easy. Many Republican lawmakers who are concerned about the deficit are well-aware that the bill will increase the deficit by a lot.

Here is the integrity call. One Republican in the House showed his integrity. One budget hawk named MASSIE said: I can't vote for this stuff. I am a budget hawk. I do not want to see increased deficits. He called it what it was. I saw him in an interview say, hey, hey, wait a minute, by your own numbers, Republican colleagues, you are driving up the deficit by trillions of dollars, and you are making the rich richer, and you are leaving future generations more bankrupt.

So this article assumes that this was all going to be decided by the Senate Parliamentarian "who advises legislators on Chamber rules." The Parliamentarian, I thought, "could rule that the current policy baseline isn't allowed."

Forcing the Republicans to have to make a choice, overruling or replacing my friend the Parliamentarian, somebody that on both sides of the aisle we respect, it is very rarely done.

I have been here for 13 years. We have had the same Parliamentarian. But that doesn't mean Republicans won't try, this article assumes. And I guess they did try.

They found a way around the Parliamentarian. They found a way around the rules of the Senate. They found a way around the ideals of reconciliation and the Byrd Rule. They are deciding the way we are going to do this is break the Senate and make up our own rules.

This is how they are going to get a bill through that gives trillion dollars of tax cuts to the wealthiest in our country who are doing very well. It is not hate on other Americans. I celebrate success, God bless you. But you don't need tax cuts, especially not that are going to be given to you on the backs of the poor, on the backs of our elders, on the backs of our children, on the backs of expectant mothers, on the backs of my mom's, your mom's Social Security.

What does it say about our values and our priorities to allow that to happen? Who are we, America, if you don't think this is a moral moment where

the character of our country is being tested?

I tell you, the Senate has stopped crazy gimmicks like this before, but the persuasive power of Democratic Senators probably won't be enough. We, as a country, like these economists that are Republicans, that are Democrats, that are nonpartisan, who called out this budget gimmickry for what it is—when is it enough?

When they came after journalists? When they came after colleges and universities, research and science? When they came after law firms who had the audacity to defend clients or to represent clients that were suing the President, who, God bless America, lost in civil courts, lost in criminal courts?

When do you cross your line? We can't let this happen. It is not a right or left moment. It is a right or wrong moment. It is a moral moment in America. I have read Republican after Republican from Republican Governors to Republican mayor groups, from the Cato Institute to the Manhattan Institute to AEL, calling out this budget gimmickry for what it is, and the result will be the same, blowing up our Federal deficit to stratospheric, almost unimaginable levels.

This is wrong every way you look at it. And if your values aren't fiscal conservatism, then vote with your integrity and vote against that. If your values are fiscal hawk and you hate deficit, then vote against the bill because it violates you.

Don't make up some fantasy that this is going to pay for itself. The 2017 tax cuts didn't, and you are going to extend them and say, well, it is going to happen this time. Oh, don't worry about it. It is going to happen this time. No, it is not.

Here is an article. "Donald Trump Built a National Debt So Big That It'll Weigh Down the Economy For Years."

One of President Donald Trump's lesser known but profoundly damaging legacies will be the explosive rise in the national debt that occurred on his watch. The financial burden that he's inflicted on our government will wreak havoc for decades, saddling our kids and grandkids with debt.

The national debt has risen by almost \$7.8 trillion during Trump's time in office. That's nearly twice as much as what Americans owe on student loans, car loans, credit cards and every other type of debt, other than mortgages, combined, according to data from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. It amounts to about \$23,500 in new federal debt for every person in the country.

Every person, \$23,500.

The growth in the annual deficit under Trump ranks as the third-biggest increase, relative to the size of the economy, of any U.S. presidential administration, according to a calculation by a leading Washington budget maven, Eugene Steuerle, co-founder of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. And unlike George W. Bush and Abraham Lincoln, who oversaw the larger relative increases in deficits, Trump did not launch two foreign conflicts or have to pay for a civil war.

In peacetimes, he is No. 3—not the reason you want to be like Lincoln.

Economists agree that we needed massive deficit spending during the COVID-19 crisis to ward off an economic cataclysm, but federal finances under Trump had become dire even before the pandemic. That happened even though the economy was booming and unemployment was at historically low levels. By the Trump administration's own description, the pre-pandemic national debt level was already a "crisis" and a "grave threat."

To our Nation.

The combination of Trump's 2017 tax cut and the lack of any serious spending restraint helped both the deficit and the debt soar. So when the once-in-a-lifetime viral disaster slammed our country and we threw more than \$3 trillion into COVID-19-related stimulus, there was no longer any margin for error.

Our national debt has reached immense levels relative to our economy, nearly as high as it was at the end of World War II. But unlike 75 years ago, the massive financial overhang from Medicare and Social Security will make it dramatically more difficult to dig ourselves out of the debt ditch.

Falling deeper into the red is the opposite of what Trump, the self-styled "King of Debt," said would happen if he became president. In a March 31, 2016, interview with Bob Woodward and Robert Costa of The Washington Post, Trump said he could pay down the national debt, then about \$19 trillion, "over a period of eight years" by renegotiating trade deals and spurring economic growth.

God, this man breaks his promises over and over. After he took office, Trump predicted that economic growth created by [his] 2017 tax cut, combined with the proceeds from the tariffs he imposed in 2017 on a wide range of goods from numerous countries, would help eliminate the budget deficit and let the U.S. begin to pay down its debt. On July 17, 2018, he told Sean Hannity of FOX News: "We have \$21 trillion in debt. When this [the 2017 tax cut] really kicks in, we'll start paying off the debt like it's water."

That is Trump on FOX News lying.

Nine days later, he tweeted, "Because of Tariffs we will be able to start paying down large amounts of \$21 trillion in debt that has been accumulated much by the Obama Administration."

The guy can't help blaming Obama.

That is not how it played out.

Nothing he said came true.

When Trump took office in January 2017, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office was projecting that the Federal deficit would be 2% to 3% of our gross domestic product during Trump's term. Instead, the deficit reached nearly 4% of gross domestic product in 2018 and 4.6% in 2019.

There were multiple culprits. Trump's tax cuts, especially the sharp reduction in the corporate tax rate to 21% from 35%—

Again, what is here—a lot of my colleagues were here. The big business groups were coming in and asking for 25 percent from 35 percent, and Trump said: No, you are asking me for 25. I am going to give you 21 percent, cut your taxes even more.

It took a big bite out of Federal revenue.

The CBO estimated in 2018 that the tax cut would increase deficits by about \$1.9 trillion over 11 years.

Meanwhile, Trump's claim—

I wish the author wrote "Trump's lie." But he says:

Trump's claim that increased revenue from the tariffs would help eliminate (or at least reduce) our national debt hasn't panned out.

Surprise, surprise.

In 2018, Trump's administration began hiking tariffs on aluminum, steel, and many other products, launching what became a global trade war with China, the European Union, and other countries.

The tariffs did bring in additional revenue. In fiscal year 2019, they netted about \$71 billion, up about \$36 billion from president Barack Obama's last year in office. But although \$36 billion is a lot of money, it is less than 1/750th of the national debt. That \$36 billion could have covered a bit more than three weeks of the interest on the national debt—that is, had the Trump administration not unilaterally decided to send a chunk of the tariff revenue to farmers affected by his [horrible] trade wars. Businesses that struggled as a result of the tariffs also paid fewer taxes, offsetting some of the increased tariff revenue.

By early 2019, the national debt had climbed to \$22 trillion. Trump's budget proposal for 2020 called it a "grave threat to our economic and societal prosperity"—

He called his own damage that.

—and asserted that the U.S. was experiencing a "national debt crisis." However, that same budget proposal included substantial growth in the national debt.

By the end of 2019, the debt had risen in our country to \$23.2 trillion and more federal officials were sounding the alarm. "Not since World War II has the country seen deficits during times of low unemployment that are as large as those that we project—nor, in the past century, has it experienced large deficits for as long as we project" [said the CBO].

Weeks later, COVID-19 erupted and made the financial situation far worse. As of Dec. 31, 2020—

About a month left, 3 weeks left in his term.

—the national debt had jumped to \$27.75 trillion, up 39% from the \$19.95 trillion when Trump was sworn in.

He increased our deficit by 39 percent.

The government ended its 2020 fiscal year with the portion of the national debt owed to investors, the metric favored by the CBO, at around 100% of GDP. The CBO had predicted less than a year earlier that it would take until 2030 to reach that approximate level of a debt.

But not under Donald Trump.

Including the trillions owed to various governmental trust funds. . . .

Under his leadership, the total debt grew and grew and grew. It is now at about 130 percent of GDP. Where are the fiscal hawks?

Normally, this is where we'd give Trump's versions of events. But we couldn't get anyone to give us Trump's side. Judd Deere, a White House spokesman, referred us to the Office of Management and Budget, which is a branch of the White House.

OMB didn't respond to our questions. Treasury directed us to comments made by OMB director Russell Vought in October, in which he predicted that as the pandemic eases and economic growth rebounds, the "fiscal picture" will improve. The OMB blamed legislators for deficits when Trump submitted his proposed 2021 budget: "Unfor-

tunately, the Congress continues to reject any efforts to restrain spending."

It ain't me, he is saying, it is them.

"Instead, they have greatly continued to the continued ballooning of the Federal debts and deficits, putting the Nation's fiscal future at risk."

Still, the deficit growth under Trump has been historic. . . . [The Tax Policy Center . . . has done a comparison of every American president using a metric called the "primary deficit."

They are saying Trump had the third biggest primary deficit growth, 5.2 percent of GDP. He is our biggest debt man. Deficits have ballooned under this President because of his tax scam, of his lies about his tax bill in 2017, none of which came true. It didn't pay for itself. It didn't close the deficits. It blew up our deficits. The benefits didn't go to working people. The benefits, as it says—over 90 percent would go to wealthy Americans and corporations.

Even some Republicans have been calling out hypocrisy. One of our colleagues, RAND PAUL, in 2018: "I can't in all honesty," RAND PAUL says, "in all good faith just look the other way because my party is now complicit in these deficits."

The other thing is there is a huge hypocrisy factor. Republicans lambasted President Obama to no end for trillion-dollar deficits, and now they have to put forward a multitrillion-dollar deficit.

Mick Mulvaney, Trump's former Chief of Staff, said in 2020:

My party is very interested in deficits when there is a Democrat in the White House. The worst thing in the whole world is deficits when Barack Obama was the president. Then Donald Trump became president, and we're a lot less interested [in deficits] as a party.

We don't care at this point.

Here is a guy I mentioned numerous times. THOMAS MASSIE, a Republican Member of the House, said earlier this year about Republicans:

We have no plan whatsoever to balance the budget other than growth, but what they're proposing is [going] to make the deficit worse.

This is what our President is trying to do, with the complicity of a lot of people who call themselves deficit hawks, who call themselves fiscal conservatives. They are going to try to blow it through here, gaming the system, creating some kind of scam to obscure the real cost of this.

We—all them on the Republican side, us on the Democratic side—we all know the truth about these tax increases and what they are going to do, how much they are going to cost, but we are going to play a game, it looks like, here unless more Americans speak up.

Republican and Democrat, people who know numbers, who know what we are doing to future generations in this country, this is wrong. And I say again that this is not right or left; it is right or wrong. This is a moral moment in America. What are we going to do?

I am so glad my friend the Senator from Hawaii is here. I try to keep M&M's in my desk in case she wants to partake in New Jersey's State product. The M&M was invented in Newark. True. I give great trivia here.

I am waiting for the Senator from Hawaii, my dear friend, to ask me a question. I have the floor.

Ms. HIRONO. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. HIRONO. I am glad you mentioned M&M's. Both of us are lawyers. I remember I got through the study for the bar exam by eating mounds and mounds of M&M's. I thank the Senator from New Jersey for continuing to provide me with M&M's.

I want to thank you, Senator BOOKER, for standing here for hours on end to push back, to fight against this administration's lawlessness. In fact, a reporter asked me today: Do you think this is a good use by Senator BOOKER of his time to be on the floor to do this?

I said: Anytime any of us gets up and uses our voices to counter the fight against the lawlessness of this station, it is a good use of our time.

So, thank you, Senator BOOKER for yielding to me and for standing up for the American people. Is it making a difference? Millions of people are watching you, Senator BOOKER. Millions have watched and are watching you. It is making a difference.

I want to ask you a question about the lawlessness of this administration. As you yourself said last night, "These are not normal times in our Nation." In fact, these are the very words that I often use when I meet with anybody who comes to see me from Hawaii—individuals, organizations. I say, "These are not normal times."

So Donald Trump has made no secret of the fact that he fancies himself a King with total disregard for the rule of law. From day one, he and his administration have taken one illegal action after another.

On his first day in office, Donald Trump issued an Executive order purporting to end birthright citizenship, a right protected in our Constitution for more than a century—birthright citizenship.

He tried to unilaterally freeze Federal funding—funding for everything from cancer research to disaster aid, funding that had already been appropriated by Congress, and the executive branch is required by law to spend it. It is not as though it is up to the President to decide what programs he is going to release money for; Congress already made that determination. By law, he is supposed to expend these funds. But, again, he thinks he is the King and he can do whatever he wants. So he put a freeze on these funds.

He has enabled Elon Musk, an unelected billionaire—the richest person in the world, whose only qualification is the more than \$200 million he spent to get Trump elected—to run roughshod through our government.

Together, they have attempted to shutter USAID and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, just for two examples. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has returned more than \$21 billion to consumers through its enforcement actions—\$21 billion going to our consumers. Apparently, King Trump can't stand that, and neither can Elon Musk. These are Agencies that do critical work at home and abroad. They represent just a miniscule part of the Federal budget.

But this doesn't stop either Trump or Musk from going after these programs. And Musk's so-called DOGE team has gained access to sensitive databases and payment systems across our government, containing the personal information of millions of Americans. So he has access to the Treasury Department database—all our Social Security numbers, our tax payments, all of that. He was running roughshod, until stopped by a court, on these databases.

They have done all this without any transparency or accountability whatsoever, meaning we still don't know the full extent of where DOGE has been or what they have done.

Trump has launched an all-out assault on our Federal workforce. He attempted to fire tens of thousands—he actually fired them—who are on probationary status overnight, only for courts to order them—these thousands and thousands of Federal employees on probationary status—to be reinstated weeks later. Talk about chaos. Talk about sowing fear.

So now he is attempting to reclassify whole swaths of Federal employees to strip them of civil service protections and in some cases eliminate their ability to bargain collectively.

He fired Department of Justice and FBI officers for seemingly no other reason than their involvement in January 6 cases—cases they were assigned to as rank-and-file officials.

It is not as though the people all at the DOJ and the FBI had a choice in the kind of cases they were going to be assigned. They were assigned January 6 cases, and the names of these people—there are some 6,000 FBI and DOJ employees who worked on January 6 cases, and there is a fear that those names will be disclosed.

He is going after schools, from kindergartners to universities, as part of his war on diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are many examples of the kind of government overreach that they are exercising through their effort to ferret out what they call diversity, equity, and inclusion, which, actually, that is a positive. Do we want to be inclusive? So I want to give you just one example.

There was a teacher in Idaho who had a poster in her classroom that said "Everyone is welcome here," and there were handprints of different colors—white, black, yellow handprints. She was told she had to take this poster down. She was told that if the handprints were all white handprints, she

could have kept the poster up, but she was told she had to take down this poster in her classroom that says "Everyone is welcome here."

She took it down at first, but she felt so bad about it that she put it back up. Then she was told by the powers that be at her school that she had a certain amount of time to take this poster down. Otherwise, there will be disciplinary action. That is the kind of government overreach that is a hallmark of this administration.

To date, the Trump administration has withheld millions of dollars from handpicked colleges and universities, conditioning the funding on unreasonable demands meant to bring these colleges to their knees. So he is starting with Harvard and Columbia. There is probably a whole long list of colleges that he has threatened to withdraw hundreds of millions of dollars from.

They have slashed funding and staffing of the Department of Education. In fact, they would like to dismantle the Department of Education, which is responsible for administering billions in funding for low-income students, students with disabilities, and something as critical as school lunch for kids. Every single State in our country relies on the funding they receive from the U.S. Department of Education. In Hawaii, we are talking about some \$300 million in funding for our schools to help our kids with disabilities and to provide school lunches through the U.S. Department of Agriculture—the things that I mentioned.

As Senator BOOKER knows well, the list goes on and on.

This administration continues to abuse its power, acting with total disregard for the rule of law, so we have turned to the courts to stop these illegal acts. Now Republicans are calling to impeach these judges who are applying the law, who are doing what they are supposed to be doing and not just giving Trump whatever results he wants, but these judges are now deemed open to impeachment.

It is clear Trump and his cronies will keep on doing whatever they want regardless of the Constitution or the law. They are crippling government and sowing total chaos across our country while doing nothing to address the actual issues people care about.

I know my colleague from New Jersey is just as concerned about lawlessness as I am. We both sit on the Judiciary Committee. We know how important adherence to the rule of law is. In fact, I have said many times that it is the rule of law that separates a democracy from all other forms of government, and we now have a President who does not think that the rule of law applies to him. WTF comes to mind.

So, Senator BOOKER, my question to you is, What are the consequences of this total lawlessness on our government, our country, and the American people?

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you, Senator HIRONO.

I think I need somebody to say what WTF? To come from you is pretty giving and precious, and I am grateful.

This rule of law is really important. It is part of this whole moment in American history that I keep calling the more moment—something beyond the normal, where we shouldn't respond in a normal fashion. This is a moment where judges rule in his favor, and he praises them. If you don't rule for him, he drags them and threatens them, so much so that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has to tell him to back up.

If elected officials speak up, many of them fear as to what the consequences would be for them or their reelections if they speak against him.

Lawyers decline, possibly, to represent people because they are worried that this President has already shown that if you represent the wrong people or represent, God forbid, people against him, he is going to try to shut down your law firm in ways that are against the rule of law that this country believes in.

If journalists and media organizations don't report in a way that he likes or confirm his arbitrary name changes for the Gulf of Mexico, there is a punishment that he tries to dish out to try to make them come to submission.

State and local governments literally can get extorted for their funding if they don't carry out his demands. Schools and universities that are starving for dollars and trying to invest them in research and science that will propel humanity to new heights—well, they could get targeted by this President if they don't do what he says.

It feels like his ultimate goal is to create a country where you cannot trust the outcome of elections that he loses because he is going to tell you that if he lost that election, it is the Big Lie. It is wrong. I won. I won. I won. I won. I don't care what judge after judge, court after court says—I won. And if you don't believe me, if you don't say, "The election I won," well, there will be consequences for that too.

This is a President who, even as we have read people on both sides of the aisle, isn't respecting the Constitution and the separation of powers. He isn't respecting the rights that we hold precious. He isn't honoring what we call the rule of law. I want to go a little bit into this for a second.

Let's talk about the separation of powers. There are many, many different cases right now, but we know that James Madison—the Founding Father who devised the basic framework for our Constitution—devoted some of the Federalist Papers to the ways the Constitution addresses the danger of concentrating too much power in one person or in one branch of government. Written in 1788, Madison's words still have resonance today.

This is what he wrote in Federalist 487:

The cumulation of all powers—legislative, executive and judiciary—in the same hands whether of one, a few, or many and whether hereditary, self-appointed or elective—may justly be pronounced the very definition of “tyranny.”

So what is this President trying to do? He is trying to jam this court decision that is not in his favor. Either the judge is corrupt and should be impeached or he is just going to deny the ruling or not follow it.

Madison explained that the Constitution set up the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches to be separate and distinct and equal and bound together by checks and balances.

It is agreed on all sides that the powers properly belonging to one of the branches ought not to be directly and completely administered by either of the other branches. It is equally evident that none of them ought to possess directly or indirectly an overruling influence over the others in the administration of their executive respective powers.

That is Federalist 48.

I am nerdy enough to have a favorite Federalist Paper. I am going to read from my favorite one, Federalist 51:

In order to lay a due foundation for the separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own, so constituted that each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others. But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department consist in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means to resist the encroachments of the others.

“[T]o resist the encroachments of the others.” We are not doing that in the Senate or in the House.

Federalist 51 continues:

It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government.

Here is the quote, folks. Here is the quote from our Founders:

If men were angels, no government would be necessary.

If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.

But our President is no angel.

This is Federalist 51 continuing:

In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control—

The government—

and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.

They are talking about at great length our Founders and the separation of powers and the checks and balances of these institutions. Yet, for 72 days of this administration, has the Congress—article I, the people’s House; the Senate, the deliberative body—have we once held this President to account?

The most powerful man in the world and the richest man in the world have taken a battle ax to the Veterans’ Administration, a battle ax to the Department of Education, a battle ax to the

only Agency solely focused on protecting consumers against big banks and other factors that might abuse them, bringing it down.

Congress established the Department of Education. Congress established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Congress. But the President doesn’t care. He is going to push as hard as he can against the principles of our Founders. And what will we do in this body? What will we do in the House of Representatives? Right now, the answer is nothing.

Has Elon Musk—the unelected, un-Senate-confirmed billionaire and No. 1 campaign contributor of Donald Trump’s, who has admitted he has made mistakes—on his website, he keeps taking down the mistakes. He keeps getting called out for them. He fires people from the FAA and then begs them to come back. He fires the people who protect us from nuclear accidents. “Oh, wait, come back.”

Have we ever in the Senate or in the House called him in for one oversight hearing to account for what he is doing to address the fears of a nation? No.

Separation of powers.

Hey, we have hearings here all the time but not with Elon Musk. Do you know why? Do you know why I think why? Tell me I am a conspiracy theorist. Because what Elon Musk is doing to some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is threatening them. He is threatening to run primaries with what, to me, would be a quarter but to him is \$100 million.

I am going to drop \$100 million against you in a primary if you step out of line or if you dare to say Hegseth is not qualified to be the Secretary of Defense. We are going to drag you through X. We are going to awaken the mob to threaten you.

Our Founders spoke so eloquently to protect against that kind of corruption, to protect against that kind of egregious tyrannical power that says: Only I can save this country. Give me all power. Let me be the strongman.

We know who he respects on the global stage. I was stunned. I thought it was a joke during the election when he said his favorite leader is Viktor Orban, who has rolled back democratic principles, who has concentrated power. I see.

Who does he choose to call a dictator—the man who was trying desperately to lead his country in defense against the authoritarian dictator and preserve his democracy or does he call the dictator a dictator? No. A simple test. Most high school students would simply pass it but no. He calls a hero a dictator.

Do we have any conversations about that in the formal capacity, to talk about the Ukrainian war, which I know people on both sides of the aisle—MAZIE HIRONO brings up the separation of powers. Why is history’s lesson so relevant today? Why do we study history? Did I learn that in high school that you study history so you don’t re-

peat the mistakes of the past? You study history to gain inspiration and insight and courage against tough times. You study history to be inspired by heroes who stood up against despots, who sacrificed themselves.

What is the lesson in history? How is it relevant to us today? Because the separation of powers between the branches of government has allowed our democracy to thrive for nearly 250 years. And now we have a person in power who is barely being checked. And if the courts check him, what he does to the courts—

In the 9 weeks or 10 weeks since Donald Trump was inaugurated, there have been more than 140 Federal lawsuits filed challenging his actions. I don’t know if another President, in my lifetime, ever has had 140 Federal lawsuits in about 9 weeks. It is a staggering figure. We should consider it a staggering figure. He must be the most sued President in U.S. history. Somebody should fact check that. But at least in my lifetime, I don’t remember Reagan; I don’t remember Bush; I don’t remember Obama or Clinton or Biden being dragged into court in the first 9 weeks so many times and losing case after case.

He may have a record for the most lawsuits filed by a President himself because he is a guy who says he loves to sue folks. In support of the big lie, he did so many lawsuits and lost them all.

The lawsuits against Trump and his administration are not frivolous. Federal judges, appointed by Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents alike, have found Trump’s Executive actions illegal, temporarily pausing many of them too.

Trump’s Executive actions and the outcomes of these lawsuits have a direct effect on Americans. These lawsuits challenge Trump.

Here are some of the examples, folks—and I am wondering where the American people stand on these lawsuits. It is not the people who are blindly loyal to him because they believe the lies that he so artfully, creatively, and convincingly tells, but just tell me where do you stand on these issues?

Attacks on veterans who have served our country in the military and civil services—well, there are lawsuits challenging his right to attack our veterans.

There are lawsuits challenging Trump on his attacks on government Agencies that protect your grandmother from online scams. I don’t know where you stand—with the grandmas getting scammed, to defend them, or the President?

Lawsuits against Trump because of his attacks on lawful American citizens born in this country and guarantee their citizenship under the U.S. Constitution. There are lawsuits against the President for withholding National Institutes of Health funds to support studies of horrific diseases like

Alzheimer's and disrupting lifesaving medical research and ongoing clinical trials.

Now, if you are a student of history, this is the problem, often, with lawsuits. *Brown v. Board of Education*, we celebrate it as the wonderful case it was. But was it obeyed? No, it wasn't.

I have a picture of Ruby Bridges in my office because it wasn't obeyed. The court didn't declare this and, suddenly, everybody said: Hey, let Black folks go to school with White folks. No. The President had to call in the National Guard to escort a little girl into a class.

That is the problem with lawsuits. If you have a defiant executive leadership, they will defy them.

These, where you stand? Do you stand with veterans? Do you stand with your grandmother against online scams? Do you stand with American citizens born in this country? Do you stand with withholding National Institutes of Health funding? It was clearly that. We know the majority of Americans are with that. But people are having to bring them to court to fight on these issues.

So many cases being done. So many cases I have here before me. So many cases. I can read them all, but you all know many of them. They are stunning the press as he pushes, as Elon Musk pushes. They push the bounds of the authorities of the Constitution of the United States, and people are bringing lawsuits. But that is not enough.

Martin Luther King didn't step down because of Thurgood Marshall's legal work. John Lewis didn't step down. Ella Baker didn't stop. Abraham Joshua Heschel didn't stop. The great Rabbi Joachim Prinz didn't stop. The people of the United States of America, more powerful than courts; the people of the United States of America, more powerful than the Constitution—I just said something controversial, so let me defend myself.

I believe in the people. I believe in the words of the great Learned Hand. He said the like of what I just said, so let me read somebody far greater, far more vaunted than this Senator from New Jersey.

Learned Hand served as a Federal judge from 1909 to 1951. He was nicknamed the 10th Justice of the Supreme Court for his many influential decisions. He wrote this speech about our Constitution, about our liberties, about the tyrants in every generation who have tried to subvert our democracy—some of them from this body, like the Red Scare that had so many Americans being unjustly fired, unjustly deported, unjustly jailed, that infringed on freedom of speech, freedom of expression. I am sorry. Every generation of Americans have seen demagogues rise to try to undermine what America stands for, and Learned Hand knew that. He had so much wisdom about our Constitution.

We have gathered here to affirm a faith, a faith in a common purpose, a common con-

viction, a common devotion. Some of us have chosen America as the land of our adoption; the rest have come from those who did the same. For this reason we have some right to consider ourselves a picked group, a group of those who had the courage to break from the past and brave the dangers and the loneliness of a strange land. What was the object that nerved us, or those who went before us, to this choice? We sought liberty; freedoms from oppression, freedom from want, freedom to be ourselves. This we then sought; this we now believe that we are by way of winning. What do we mean when we say that first of all we seek liberty? I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies [in our hearts] there it needs no constitution, no law, no court. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women?

Please, please, please, listen to what he writes next:

What is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of us Americans? This is what he says next:

It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few; as we have learned [in our country] to our sorrow.

What then is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the mind of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded; the spirit of liberty is the spirit of Him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned but [has] never quite [yet] forgotten; that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest. . . . And now in that spirit of that America for which our young men are at this moment fighting and dying; in that spirit of liberty and . . . America I ask you to rise and [say] with me [the] pledge of our faith in the glorious destiny of our beloved country.

I now ask you to raise your hands and repeat after me this pledge.

And he says the Pledge of Allegiance. He believed that the Constitution dies if the spirit of it dies in the hearts of men and women.

I would tell you, this Constitution has saved my life. It made my life because people marched to make real on the promise of our democracy. People bled to make real on this democracy.

When some people told us that this Constitution didn't apply to us, this body—this body, Republicans in America—stood up and said: No, President Johnson, we are going to do amendments.

We saw the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment would guarantee my ancestors finally full citizenship in the United States of America and the protections of the Constitution.

I am here in this body because of past generations that fought to uphold the

Constitution, not because the Constitution was real to them but because they brought reality and hope and love and promise to the Constitution. They were Americans who said, like Langston Hughes: America never was America to me, but I swear this oath, America will be.

They loved this country so much even when it didn't love them back. I am here because of that. I am the fourth Black person popularly elected to this body because of generations that believed so much in this document that they were going to make it real, if live in them.

I quoted earlier today—it is worth quoting here again—the great Margaret Chase Smith, a U.S. Senator from Maine, a Republican in her famous "Declaration of Consciences" speech delivered on June 1, 1950.

Thank you. Thank you, my good Senator friend WHITEHOUSE because, Lord knows, I would have slipped and fallen on my tuchus and have ended this long filibuster because I fell to the floor. That is what you mean when your brother has your back.

What did this Republican say in the time of tyranny in her times, in the time when the Constitution stopped living in people's hearts, where people believed that whipped up fears of others by demagogues, where people believed the fear that they heard again and again on the radio that we should fear other Americans, when people believed their fear justified them, inhibiting the greatness of the Constitution? What is that old saying from one of our great leaders of the past? If you are willing to give up your liberty in order to ensure your security, you will lose them both.

So here was this courageous Republican, who, in a time that demagogues were whipping up fear, where First Amendment rights were being trampled, where people were being intimidated into silence, where people were afraid to go up against the big and the powerful and the rich, where people were being deported from our country, where Jews were being deported and accused of being communists as justification to take them out of the country because they didn't have permanent legal status—yes, that is our history. What did she stand up and say in the Senate, this Republican, putting her own career at risk to call out Senator McCarthy?

She said:

I don't believe the Republican Party is in any sense a party of fear. I do believe that the Republican Party has made an alliance, though, with the four horsemen of fear—the fear of communists, the fear of labor unions, the fear of the future, and the fear of progress.

There are people fearmongering now. There are people trying to tell Americans to hate Americans. You are either with the great "Dear Leader" or you are endangering an enemy. And it is not just Democrats who are being dragged, there are other Republicans. I

saw it happen. I saw it happen to one of our Vice President's daughters, a Congresswoman. I saw it happen to colleagues of mine like Jeff Flake, like John McCain, and like Corker, who stood up in this body and told the truth about dear leader, and they saw the consequences politically.

You want to talk about where the Constitution lives and defending the Constitution? First make it real in your heart, like those women did before the amendment that granted them the right to vote, who loved this country so much.

You want to know where the Constitution lives in your heart? I just met with extraordinary men and women who are Native Americans to this country, who were here before any of us. They love this country so much even with the sins against them.

You want to know where the Constitution lives? Let it live in the hearts of all Americans now, and ask yourself: Is the leader of our country living the Constitution in his heart? Because, as Learned Hand said, it is not braggadocios; it is not mean; it is loving; it is kind; it is expansive.

We are Americans. Our creed above the Presiding Officer says it all—"E Pluribus Unum"—trying to remind our country that despite racial difference, gender, besides Republican or Democrat, ethnics—you know all the lines that divide us are not nearly as strong as the ties that bind us. That is what "e pluribus unum" means.

What about the pledge that Learned Hand read? Listen to the words. It says things. It says things in that pledge. It says that we are one nation under God, that we are indivisible and we pledge ourselves to liberty and justice not just to the people who agree with the President but for all.

God bless my courageous colleagues who have spoken out in the past and suffered the consequences. Liberty and the Constitution live in their hearts. They put patriotism over politics.

We are in this moral moment now. We are in this moral moment now. This is not right or left. Don't let them say this is a partisan shift; it is not. It is not left or right; it is right or wrong.

America, this is a moral moment. Does the Constitution live in your heart?

Mr. MURPHY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. Before I yield—I love this power trip. It is the only time in 13 years I have really felt this power. I don't have to let my colleagues speak. And I, first amongst us all, really love to speak.

I just want to say thank you to CHRIS MURPHY. I repeated this 10, 15 hours ago, but I just want to tell the story, and then I will let you go, CHRIS.

Nine years ago on this floor, after the Pulse shooting, we called CHUCK SCHUMER, CHRIS and I. I saw a moment and he saw a moment that we couldn't do business as usual. We just said: How can you have this mass shooting, yet

another mass shooting, and this body just go on as business as usual? It is why I am standing here right now. And we agreed, with CHUCK SCHUMER's help, that we would get control of the Senate.

CHRIS MURPHY went down to that desk, and I promised him: I will be with you. I will stand with you. I won't sit down. We will go as long as we possibly can.

And he began a filibuster 9 years ago, and it lasted 15 hours. And he still had fuel in the tank; I know he did. I was a hurting guy. I told you my back was hurting, my feet were hurting. But we had a direct end when MITCH MCCONNELL agreed to give us a vote on commonsense gun safety, which I think every American and most gun owners agree on—just universal background checks. It failed to get 60 votes in the Senate, but you stood and I stood with you.

He said to me days ago: If you are going to do this, Brother, I will be your aide-de-camp this time. And you have been with me. You have been with me far past 15 hours. You have been with me for 23 hours 49 minutes.

(Applause.)

Although my cousin Pam in the Gallery—she has been here the same amount of time.

All right. So I am going to yield my power. It is not going to go to my head. This is why we need separation of powers—checks on men. Men are not angels.

I yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mr. MURPHY. Senator BOOKER, it has been a wonder to be with you on the floor these last 24 hours. You indeed did something extraordinary and performed a sympathy filibuster with me 9 years ago where, as I stood at that desk for 15 hours, you stood on the Senate floor. You didn't need to but you did in solidarity.

I have been with you for the last 24 hours, but I have sat for most of this. You have done the hard work.

You are an extraordinary Senator. You are an extraordinary American. And I think I can say, on behalf of everyone in this Chamber and many people in the Gallery, you are an extraordinary friend. So I think all of us feel privileged to be here with you at this moment—this moment of peril, this moment of danger, this moment of opportunity for the Nation, but also this moment of history.

On August 28, 1957, at about 8:45 p.m., Strom Thurmond took this floor, and he took the floor with the intent of trying to block the 1957 civil rights bill. This was the most significant—really, the only—civil rights bill that had been before the U.S. Senate in 90 years. Most famously, about 10 years before, when he was running for President as a Dixiecrat, he had said:

There are not enough troops in the Army to force the Southern people to break down segregation and admit the Negro race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes and into our churches.

He sat on this floor for just over 24 hours, and he made the case for why this Nation should continue to segregate Black and White. He started, in fact, by reading every single State's voting rights laws. Every single State's laws he read into the RECORD, apparently as proof that every State adequately protected all of its voters and that no additional laws were necessary.

He had friends in his cause to preserve segregation that came down to the floor and asked him long questions to give him breathers.

At the end of that 24 hours, at around 9 p.m. the following night, he could go no longer. His final words in his 24-hour, recordbreaking filibuster were:

I expect to vote against the bill.

But within hours, the bill passed. It became law. It established the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. It was not nearly enough, but it broke 90 years of inaction.

What you have done here today, Senator BOOKER, couldn't be more different than what occurred on this floor in 1957. Strom Thurmond was standing in the way of inevitable progress toward equal political and economic rights for Black Americans. It was inevitable only because the people of this Nation were standing up at that moment—the beginning of the civil rights movement—to make clear that progress was inevitable.

I say that that moment is so different from this moment because today you are standing in the way not of progress but of retreat. You are standing in the way of retreat from the rule of law, retreat from our commitment to provide care to the most vulnerable, retreat from our common cause—at least what used to be a common cause—that we would have zero tolerance for corruption at the highest levels of government.

You have recognized, rightly, that this multifaceted retreat from everything that makes this country so special and the speed of that retreat over the last 71 days—it is an exceptional moment. You have said that word over and over again. It is not normal, what this administration has been doing to rob from us the values that used to unite left and right in this Nation.

So you made this bold decision to engage in an exceptional tactic, to declare 24 hours ago that you were going to stand on this floor for as long as you could to try to raise the specter of failure in our fight against this retreat for our colleagues and for the American public.

The exceptional nature we have heard so eloquently from you over the course of the last 24 hours—the massive transfer of wealth in this reconciliation bill from the poor and the middle class to the wealthy; the industrial-scale harassment of journalists, of universities, of law firms; the destruction of the independence of the Department of Justice; the destruction of the American knowledge economy and the research economy; the use of the White

House in violation of the Constitution to make those in power richer—you have laid out the case.

It is funny—I remember this from 9 years ago—when you are sitting in your spot—you haven't moved in 24 hours—you have no idea what is happening outside of this building. You don't actually know how many people in this country have engaged in the conversation that you started 24 hours ago.

On one social media platform alone, there have been 150 million clicks on your live stream. This is a country of 300 million Americans. You have been able to pique a conversation here amongst our colleagues—who we need to stand with us eventually against this retreat—and across this country. And I think we are here, as we reach a pivotal hour, to just say thank you for having the courage, the audacity, to bring us on this journey.

So my question is pretty simple. I think you will find when you finally leave this Chamber that you have done something extraordinary, that you didn't solve the problem, that we are still a long way from being able to successfully beat back this retreat, but that you have accomplished something extraordinary.

So I guess that is just my question. When you set out with this idea, when this was starting to germinate in your mind, my question for you, Senator BOOKER, is, What did you hope to accomplish?

Mr. BOOKER. I thank my colleague and my friend again. He and I talked about this, that I was challenged by my own constituents to do something different, challenged by my own constituents to do something, challenged by my own constituents to take risks.

My staff here should get a lot of credit for making it thus far. I am not sitting down, but I am mindful of what you said about Strom Thurmond. I am mindful of that right now as I watch that clock tick for another 20 minutes.

I am grateful for my staff. I am grateful for the Parliamentarians, the clerks. I am grateful for the Republican Presiding Officers.

I don't know if I want to out CURTIS on the note that he—I am sorry—the good Senator, the Presiding Officer—forgive me—on the note he sent me, but this is the kind of specialness in this place that I love.

I want to tell a few connecting stories. I think some of my colleagues know a few of these, but I want to explain why I started this whole 24 hours talking about John Lewis and good trouble.

Sixty years ago, when he was on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, he shook New Jersey as he shook the Nation. When Bloody Sunday happened, there was a White guy on the couch in New Jersey who was watching TV and was so shaken, this lawyer said: I have to go to Alabama. He realized he couldn't afford a plane ticket, so this man slumped back down on his couch.

Then he said: At a moral moment in America, I am not going to let my inability to do everything undermine my determination to do something, to do something different.

He got up and said: OK—it was a meager calculation, but it was different—I can afford 1 hour a month of pro bono work.

He called around, and he found this woman named Lee Porter who was heading up an organization called the Fair Housing Council and said: Could you use a lawyer?

She was like: Hallelujah. Thank you, Jesus. Yes, we need some help.

They worked together and they designed a sting operation where they would send Black families in areas of New Jersey that would not sell homes to Black people, where usually the best public schools were. If they were told the house was sold, they would send a White couple behind them to expose that the house was still for sale and expose all of this.

Well, they had a lot of success getting things written about the severe housing discrimination in my State.

He said that after about 5 years, 4 years: I got this case file of a Black family trying to move to New Jersey, and they were frustrated because every time they would look at homes in the places with the best public schools, which happened to be White communities, they said they couldn't find a home.

So they did the sting operation. They sent the Black couple in. They were told this incredible house was not for sale. They loved the house. So that when the White couple went, they threw in a bid to see if it would be accepted. The bid was accepted. Papers were drawn up.

On the day of the closing, the White couple did not show up. The Black man did—lawyer, Marty Friedman marched in, confronted the real estate agent.

You would think 1969, a year after the Fair Housing Act, that he would capitulate, but he didn't. This real estate agent gets up so angry. He punches the lawyer in the face and sics a Doberman pinscher on the Black guy.

They get out of there, shaken up, and they start writing letters back and forth. The good owners of the home found out what was going on. They were so aghast. They said: Let us sell the house directly to the Black family.

The Black family moved in, and 43 years later, the baby from that family became the fourth popularly elected Black Senator in our country—me.

I tell that story because I started with John Lewis 24 hours ago, and it was John Lewis and a bunch of marchers on the bridge that influenced the destiny of my life and my family's life.

We are all interconnected. As King says:

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.

But I want to tell you the second time John Lewis shook up my life.

I was mayor of the city of Newark. I got called to be on a TV show. I got called by a guy named Skip Gates, who I love, admire. He calls me and he jazzes me up. He fills my ego. He just flatters me: Hey, I got this show called Finding Your Roots, CORY BOOKER. You are a rising star. You are this hotshot. We should feature you in this.

I am like: Oh, great. Oh, don't say that, Skip, but OK. Yeah, of course. And then I said: OK. Who are you going to pair me with?

I thought it was going to be another young, hotshot, up-and-coming politician in America.

No. He goes: I am going to pair you with John Lewis, and my heart sank a little bit—actually maybe it was my ego that sank. My heart got excited. Because I know how these shows start. They start with biographies.

So imagine the show starting: John Lewis; hero of the Civil Rights Movement, literally bled the southern soil red for freedom and justice.

And then he goes to my biography: CORY BOOKER; riding his big-wheel in suburban New Jersey. The show was unbelievable; a mountain and boy.

But I got to meet John Lewis. I got to tell him that story that he changed my life, and I didn't even know it—on a bridge in Alabama, changed the course of events in New Jersey that led to me.

Third take on John Lewis, my colleagues know I got here in a special election in 2013. What all of my colleagues might not know is I came here with a broken heart. My mom and I came here with a broken heart because I was elected in October, sworn in in October, but also in October my dad died of Parkinson's. That is why I got choked up reading these letters of people with Parkinson's.

So when we came down here, we were grieving. My dad was not with us. My mom lost her husband of nearly 50 years, and I am going to get sworn in. It is a big event, but my parents and my campaign decided: You know what we should do? Right before you get sworn in or brought over here to be escorted to the President and Vice President, that you should go and sit with John Lewis.

So we went to John Lewis' office and a lot of my colleagues from the CBC, a lot of my colleagues from the House, a lot of my colleagues, like here, came over from the House, know his office.

You walk into his office, and it looks like a civil rights museum except he is in all the pictures. And this is John Lewis—we who knew him—this was him, mountain of a man. He had already prepared eggs and grits, a good southern breakfast, and wouldn't let my mom and I get up.

He serves us all, and he humbly is saying: This is why I marched. This is why I sacrificed for historic historymaking days like this. He told us how special this was for him.

He told me he would be right here where my friends are sitting, watching

me get sworn in and how proud he was going to be. In a sense, he stood in for my dad on this floor, and then, boom, I am Senator.

I find colleagues and friends here. I find a lot of colleagues and friends in the CBC. At that point, I was the only African American in our caucus and found so many friends, so many heroes that are gone from the Senate now, who looked at me, adopted me, helped me.

DICK DURBIN, you were amazing in those early months.

And this is the next time I meet John Lewis for a moment that changed my life. CHRIS MURPHY, BRIAN SCHATZ, remember this moment. It was during the 2017 healthcare debate, when I didn't know how we were going to stop that bill from passing and taking away healthcare from 20 million Americans.

But John Lewis: Hey, CORY, let's do something different. What you got in mind?

I said: Well, John Lewis, I got this phone. It is very powerful. Let's do a Facebook live. So I open up Facebook live, we meet in between in the Capitol.

He says: Where can we go to sit down for a place?

My favorite place to sit, I watched Schoolhouse Rock so much, it is right on the steps of the Capitol. Let's just sit there and talk; CHRIS MURPHY, BRIAN SCHATZ the first people out to sit with us.

The time lapse—the time lapse is amazing. First two, three people. Then 10 people. Then 50 people. Then hundreds of people. I have it all coming because of the moral magnetism of this man, John Lewis.

And he talked to people that night who were looking for, what can I do? I am just one person.

And this guy in his 20s who is just one person and caused a heck of lot of good trouble, he told him: Don't lose faith, don't lose hope. Get angry, but let it fuel you. Be afraid, but know that is a necessary precondition to courage. He was amazing that night. I know my colleagues remember that.

And then there was a next time. Oh, Brother WARNOCK, you are gonna love this one.

The next time I was with John Lewis, Jimmy Carter had gotten a little sick, but then he got better, and he went back to teaching Sunday school. And I thought: This man is in his 90s. I need to go to Sunday school. So who do I know—there is a waiting line. It is like people sneak out all night. I might have been a little selfish. How do I know I can get in?

I call John Lewis. I said: Hey, I got this great idea. Why don't we go to Jimmy Carter and watch him teach Sunday school? So I have the singular greatest road trip. I fly into Atlanta. We get into a car, and we drive all those hours to Plains, GA.

Indeed, people were waiting outside, but it is John Lewis—come on in. We sit in the front row; I must be in the front row. We sit down, and then this

marvelous incredible moment comes. Somebody comes and says: Congressman Lewis, Senator BOOKER, the President and First Lady would love to see you beforehand.

This is my first time meeting President Jimmy Carter. But I walk in, I am sort of on the sidelines. These two men are hugging each other; me and the first lady.

The two of them whisper for a second, and Jimmy Carter walks over to me and says: I hear you are thinking of running for President of the United States.

He did something incredible. He says: I think you should run—and he pokes my heart—only if you run from here.

The last time—the powerful moments I have had in my life with that man, that so many of us have had those powerful moments, the last time happened because of a man named MICHAEL COLLINS. I know people—there are people in this room that got the same phone call that I got, that: It won't be long now, that John Lewis is going to pass very soon. He can't speak, but I know he would want you to have your moment to say goodbye to him.

And what do I do? What do I do? Say goodbye to a man that is a legend in my life, a legend in our Nation? What do you do to say goodbye to him? I wasn't prepared. I can't say I said anything eloquent.

MICHAEL COLLINS, God bless you, man. You put the phone by his ear and you just gave me my time to have a conversation with the man that would soon die, a man that changed my life, that helped my family get into a neighborhood that loved me and cherished me. God love Harrington Park.

The man that stood in for my father when heaven brought him home, the man that showed me on the steps of this Capitol how powerful the people are. It wasn't about him. It was about them.

The man that brought me to see a President, flattered every Senator's ego telling them what they want to hear: Run for President.

And so I said everything I could, but the last thing I said I remember very well. I said: I love you—I said: I love you, and I said: John, I know you are going to be in Heaven looking down on us, and I promise you—I promise you, John Lewis—that I will do everything possible, that we will do everything possible to make you proud.

The Civil Rights generation is starting to be called home. The leaders are leaving us. We in the CBC have lost a lot of greats. I can't remember the—forget the promise I made to John Lewis with all that he gave me, with all that he gave his country, that I said we would make him proud.

So this is one of those moments that John Lewis—he would not be sitting still. He would be calling me up and say: You still got that Facebook thing? I go: No, I don't really use Facebook anymore.

But there is a thing called TikTok or—I don't know what John Lewis would say right now. I know what he said in 2017.

But I will be honest with you. I don't know what he would say, but John Lewis would say something. He would do something. He wouldn't treat this moral moment like it was normal. John Lewis new what King said, that what we have to repent for, all of us here, we will have to repent for, is not just the vitriolic words and violent actions of so-called bad people.

What we have to repent for in our day and age is the appalling silence and the inaction of good people. This is our moral moment. This is when the most precious ideas of our country are being tested, where the Constitution and the question is being called: Where does the Constitution live, on paper or in our hearts? This is the moment. Generations get them. We are on a crossroads here, folks.

Healthcare is on the balance. Veterans are on the balance. Priorities are on the balance. Where is our priorities, America? More tax cuts disproportionately going to the wealthy. Greater budget deficits in the trillions and trillions of dollars. Or are we going to do something different like John Lewis would call us to do?

He would call us to get into good trouble, necessary trouble, save the soul of America. But you all know John: Don't hate each other. Don't let anybody pull you so low as to hate them.

I said this about the presiding elder, different parties, but he showed me an act of kindness during this speech. He and I talked about energy policy. He has amazing ideas. I want to partner with him.

Don't hate anybody. Did the folks in Birmingham—did Martin Luther King, Fred Shuttlesworth, Dorothy Cotton, James Bevel, did they bring bigger dogs and bigger fire hoses to match the sheriff's—Bull Connor—thank you. I have been standing here a long time.

They didn't do that. They were creative artists of activism. They called to the conscious of a country. They challenged our moral imagination, not to focus on hate but focus on what is possible in America if we redeem the dream, if we dream America anew.

That generation in their 20s and their 30s, that is what they demanded. Martin Luther King didn't go to the March on Washington with a list of grievances against the racists in our country. He went there and called to the conscious of the country. He said he "had a dream." That is what we need in our generation, a vision to redeem the dream to call our country together.

Yes, there is a man in the White House who is the most powerful man in the land, and his partner is the richest man in the world. But as long as this is a democracy that we can still protect, the power of the people is greater than the people in power, if they use their powers.

There is a great African American woman author once said: The most common way people give up their power is not realizing they have it in the first place.

I have been calling out names, folks, to tell them they have power.

I read the stories of DeAnna, of Wendy and Cassie, of Tonya, of Cameron, of Jeanne, of Susan, of Edna, Randi, of Dylan, of Theresa, of Pamela, of Sally and Mike, of Carole, Rosemari, Danielle, of Judith, of Elizabeth, of Sandra, Alicia, Maggie, Nybil, Laura, Michael, Robin, Mary, Allyson, Ash, Roseann, Kerry, Samantha P., Raphael, Will, Anthony, Sean, and so many more. I read their stories here because while we were elected, they are the power of our country.

I have made mistakes. We all have. Both parties have a lot of mistakes to account for. The ballast of this country, what will anchor us to our ideals, what will call us to new heights, lift our heads, lift our hopes, what will call us to rise is each other.

We need each other. We need a greater love in this country. We need a greater fight in this country. We need a greater determination. We can't act as if these are normal times.

These people's stories that I read were calling out for help: Senator, help me. Someone, help me. I am in danger of losing my healthcare. Someone help me. I am a veteran. Look what happened to me. It is not fair. I fought for this country. Help me. Help me. I am worried about my Social Security, and the rural office I go to is being closed. Help, people calling out for help. And what do Americans do when people are calling out for help?

They built an infrastructure. The greatest project ever, called the Underground Railroad, where Quakers, White folks joined with Black folks to shuttle people to freedom. What did they do when people were worried and fearful? They called people together from across their country. Let's have a conference. Let's go to Seneca Falls.

What did they do when they faced violence? Oh, look at the people at Stonewall who stood up, who pushed back, who organized, who won.

What do they do when the dogs are unleashed on us, when the firehose is unleashed on us? Look at what they did in Selma.

I am getting close to a record, folks, but—

(Applause.)

There is a room here in the Senate named after Strom Thurmond. To hate him is wrong, and maybe my ego got too caught up, that if I stood here maybe, maybe, just maybe I could break this record of the man who tried to stop the rights upon which I stand. I am not here though because of a speech. I am here despite his speech.

I am here because as powerful as he was, the people were more powerful.

(Applause.)

I will remind you all these people that believe like me that we have got

to redeem the dream, turn again to John Lewis because you all know the story, my colleagues, of when the man that beat him savagely, drew blood, cracked bones, decades later, when he was a Congressman, that man brought his grandson with him to ask for forgiveness from John Lewis.

I heard about this story when I was in the car in Georgia with him.

What did you do, John, this man who had so viciously beat you, wounded you, bruised you, battered you, what did you do when he came to ask you for forgiveness? What did you do?

And the good Christian man, the man of faith, simply said: Every one of us needs mercy. Every one of us needs redemption. I forgave him. I hugged him. We wept. And I looked at the boy, this Nation needs you too.

John—

Mr. SCHUMER. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. CHUCK SCHUMER, it is the only time in my life I could tell you no.

Mr. SCHUMER. I just want to tell you, question, do you know you have just broken the record? Do you know how proud this caucus is of you? Do you know how proud America is of you?

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ladies and gentlemen, order, order. The Chair does not wish to take away from this moment, but I think the best way to honor this great accomplishment to our guests in the Gallery is to make a rare exception and let you stand to show your appreciation. I will not constrain my fellow Senators.

Mr. BOOKER. CHUCK SCHUMER, I have yielded for a question, and you asked me did I know. I know now.

(Applause.)

I want to not quite wrap this up yet. I don't want to wrap this up yet. My mom's Senator—my mom has been watching. I know CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO has a podium in front of her. She could give me a rest. I would like to go a little further if we can, just a little further.

I love, again, I know people are trying to train each other, in all of our media operations they give the worst images of the people of the other party, but I want to tell you one of the funny tweets my staff gave me is something TED CRUZ said around 1920 hours. He said: Maybe I should pull a fire alarm, he is going to break my record.

I am going to pause in a moment, if she has a question for me, to CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, because she is my mother. But I do want to just say again, two points, make if I can, one is how grateful I am to my staff. When we decided to do this many days ago—

(Applause.)

When we decided to do this days ago, they were like, we have to do this, and we started preparing and working on this, and they did an extraordinary job. They were with me late nights, writing, writing, writing.

I just feel guilty because they wrote about 10 books, and we didn't use all of them. There were really some stuff pulling from Republicans and Democrats, a critique of this moment. Pulling from Democrats and Republicans, Republican Governors that were saying: Do not cut Medicaid. States that know, as my colleagues do, that have a trigger; that if the Medicaid funding goes below 90 percent, that they stop the Medicaid expansion.

My staff really worked hard to not make this just Democratic voices, to make it people in our country that Republicans and Democrats—you heard me mention in the speech, the Cato Institute, the Manhattan Institute, all people who are honest arbiters and were saying that what Trump is doing is wrong; that a budget like this that blows massive holes in our deficit, it will be something our children are trying to pay for. And what are they ultimately paying for that caused this big deficit? It is trillions of dollars of tax cuts that people like DOGE, multimillionaire, multibillionaire Musk will benefit from, but children won't.

They did such a good job bringing together authorities on both sides of the aisle, I just want to thank them. I want to thank my cousin Pam and my family. Cousin Pam, like CHRIS MURPHY, was here for the whole time.

I want to thank CHRIS MURPHY again. (Applause.)

He never stopped telling me: We can do this, we can do this, we can do this, and said, I will stay with you. He has been with me on the floor. I hope you don't look as tired as I look because you look beat, man. Do I look that bad?

All right. I want to go a little bit past this, and then I am going to deal with some of the biological urgencies.

But I am going to wait here because I have the power, I have the floor, somebody has to ask me, perhaps from my mom's State, the way that is supposed to work.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. So will the good Senator from New Jersey yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. My mom would be so upset with me, my Aunt Marilyn, Butch, my Aunt Shirley, all the people that are your constituents and not mine, they would be upset with me if I didn't yield to you for a question while retaining the floor.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Well, first of all, Senator BOOKER, I have to say, we in Nevada are so proud of you. We are proud you are Nevada Strong. You are one of us. You are definitely New Jersey-Nevada Strong. And I am so proud of what you have accomplished so far and being willing to stay here as long as it takes to help you get your message across. And I think that is the important moment here. We are all here right now.

So I want to pose a question to you, actually a couple questions, but I want to start off and set the stage here because you have been here, now, what,

for over 24 hours. You are missing some of the national news, things that are happening out there. But one of the things I want to point to that has happened that you may not be aware of, and you touched on it a little earlier today, is this notion that we have now a President who is actually focused on billionaires and tax cuts for billionaires at the expense of the American public. And one of the things we have watched him do is cut funding for medical research.

Now, what you may not know is just today, just today, I found out that HHS laid off the entire Healthy Aging Branch of the CDC, just today.

This office administers Alzheimer's disease programs, and it oversees the funding from the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act, and it is a piece of legislation that I was so proud to partner with SUSAN COLLINS on, and she has fought for, and we have fought for funding for it, to support caregivers and their families.

And Congress just reauthorized this funding. And now we have a President that has stopped the critical work that scientists are doing to try and cure Alzheimer's. And I bring this to your attention, Senator, because like you, and I think like all of us, there are personal moments in the work that we do.

My personal moment is my grandmother, whom I am named after, died from Alzheimer's. And she died at a time in Las Vegas when there was not enough research, when there was not enough healthcare, when there was really not enough providers to understand what was going on.

And so for many of us this fight, not only is it personal, but we recognize the impact that it has outside the beltway in so many families and lives across the country, and that is what this is about.

In Nevada, as of 2023, there are 49,000 people, 65 and older, living with Alzheimer's, and that is projected to reach 65,000 this year.

Not only did we hear that HHS laid off the entire Healthy Aging Branch of the CDC, but Donald Trump also recently terminated a \$14,000 NIH research grant that had been supporting Alzheimer's research at the University of Nevada—Las Vegas.

He has continued, continued to cut the grant for essential research for so many reasons.

We have seen these funding cuts; we have seen mass layoffs; and the impoundment of grants that have already been approved by Congress. This is a violation of the rule of law, and you have been talking about that for the last couple of hours.

President Trump is forgetting that this is personal. It is happening to so many families.

So my question, Senator BOOKER, to you is what you think families and caregivers of those impacted by Alzheimer's, how they are feeling about what is happening right now?

Mr. BOOKER. So this bothers me for two reasons, and the first you have al-

ready mentioned, is this is the point of the bipartisan work that we do. I talked about CHRIS MURPHY and the bipartisan gun bill that lots of people here worked on with Senator CORNYN and others and how upset my State is that some of that community violence intervention money that I worked so hard to get in that bill is being clawed back by a President.

There are people in this room, I know so many of you, and I know on the other side that have done such great work to work with our colleagues, to find common ground, and get really important programs passed that bring resources to families, and it is being clawed back by our President—not with consultation, not with a hearing, not with a discussion of even why you would target Alzheimer's research. That is a violation of the separation of powers, and I wish my Republican colleagues would hold more hearings about that. These are programs they like.

I saw them with USAID. I worked with Marco Rubio on some of those programs and those investments that have now been cut and clawed back.

So it is a separation of powers issues. It is an offense to the common goals we share in this community of leaders.

But the second reason it bothers me is an article I read hours ago by Fareed Zakaria. He talked about what is happening to a nation that cuts so dramatically what is one of the best taxpayer investment dollars in biomedical sciences. If you are an investor and I told you there is an investment that for every dollar you invest, you would get \$5 back for your economy, folks would be invested in that vehicle.

Well, that is NIH funding. Every dollar you invest—who would cut a profit center? It is not just a profit center though. The outcomes and discoveries could change the lives of people who are suffering in your Nation and around the world. But he is attacking them.

I read about all these universities from around the country. That shows you how magnanimous I am trying to be. I even read stories from USC—I am sorry, a rival. And all of these universities are cutting their post-docs, cutting their Ph.D.s, because they don't know. As Donald Trump threatens the direct costs, they are stopping.

And Fareed Zakaria said: So painfully to all Americans with American pride, as we are doing that, China, when they had the Cultural Revolution, they first went after their universities. Now in modern China, their government is doing the opposite. They are trying to out-America us. They are massively increasing their investment in scientific research because they know if they get ahead of us on quantum computing, all of our subs can be located and God knows what could happen. Any kind of cryptology they could break. They know, if they could get ahead of us on scientific research, the power and advantage that will give them. They are doubling down.

What are we doing in America? We are tolerating a President that is cutting the funding that will predict who defines the future and what values will define those futures. Will they be democratic values or values of the country competing with us to beat us? And right now we are giving them a head start.

The final reason that question bothers me is because my father died of Parkinson's, and he had Parkinson's-related dementia. I know what that is like. I know the pain families are enduring.

I remember the time my dad and my mom were in the movie theater, and my mother just shook my world. It was in Georgia. And so many people here in this room have had the same experience. We are in a movie theater, and my mom leans over to me and said: You need to take your dad to the bathroom.

I never imagined—in my years of my dad, as a 2-year-old and 3-year-old, taking me to the bathroom—that one day I would have to take him, in this Atlanta movie theater in the middle of a movie—which I was like, OK, it is time for me to do this ritual that so many families know.

I pick my dad up, and he is shuffling with his Parkinson's. I am not seeing any light in his eyes. I am letting him hold me, and he is shuffling to the bathroom. We get to the bathroom, and his hands are shaking. He is standing in front of the urinal, and I realize I have to unbuckle this man's pants.

So many families know this. And my ego—I am sorry. I was leaning over saying: Wait a minute. I am in a public bathroom leaning over. I am unbuckling another man's pants. Please God, don't let someone come in.

As if God heard my call, someone walked in. I heard the person walking, and I am like, please keep walking. I heard the feet walk past me and stop, and the man turns around and says: "Oh, my God, CORY BOOKER."

And then I look up at my dad, and I see the clarity in his eyes. He is 100 percent there, and he is grinning and loving my mortified embarrassment.

Alzheimer's is devastating to so many American families watching the loved one of their lives diminish, and we are cutting funding. Donald Trump is cutting funding democratically, bipartisanly approved?

So forget the separation of powers. It is important—so important. If that doesn't get you, then maybe think about the competition with China. If that doesn't get you—if those two don't get you, America, think about the millions of Americans struggling with Alzheimer's, the struggles of those families.

This is a moral moment, America. This is going to define the character of our country for years and years to come.

Has the Senate called a hearing on your bipartisan funding, Senator? No. Have we done our oversight responsibility? Have we checked, as I read from

the Federalist Papers, as our Founders wanted us to do—it is to check the executive, to be the check of the executive. That balances our governmental powers. No, we are not checking the executive.

With Signalgate, I have heard from Republicans that serve in Congress—535 with us—I know other colleagues have heard. They are mortified.

You talked about that. They are mortified about that. And, again, it is not partisan. The Biden administration made foreign policy mistakes. Obama made foreign policy mistakes. Reagan, when I was growing up, I was hearing about the Iran-Contra scandal.

I am not going to be one of those people that says we are pristine, perfect Democrats. We made mistakes. We made failings. We let them down. We have reckoning in our own party that we are dealing with right now.

That doesn't say that you should be one of these people that says: Well, Biden did it.

No. You should be a leader of character that says there is something wrong here. In fact, you could point to real problems in the national security of our country and the laws that we established.

One of those law is very simple. You are supposed to preserve records. How can a Signal chain that disappears not be a violation of the law of this land? Is there a hearing on that—the head of the Intel Committee? Not a hearing at all.

Where are the checks and balances spelled out in the Constitution? We are derelicting our duties here in the Senate. We really are. And the consequence of that is the very national security of our country. How many times do you think—do you think this was the first time they created a Signal chat or is this a pattern of practice? You are a really rational man.

I keep looking at you, Mark. You are my leader on these issues, or JACK REED.

No. This indicates a real problem, and the Senate—the U.S. Senate—should get to the bottom of it.

(Applause.)

This is a moral moment. I keep saying it is a moral moment. Who are we going to be? What is going to define us? It is time not for the typical tribalism—time for leaders to start standing up and say: You know what? We can go a different way. We can imagine a different country.

That is why I pointed out the new leader of the Democratic Party of the House side. We are a different generation. There is a rising generation of people. I talked about my friend who wrote this great book, "Abundance." There are a whole bunch of new ideas out there about the future, the possibilities, about the hope, about the greatness of America—not greatness that is braggadocious, not the greatness that says "I am better than you," not the greatness that says "Only I can fix things." It is not the America we want.

We want an America that says "We the people," an America that says "E pluribus unum," an America that says that history shows that rugged individualism and self-reliance are important values. But rugged individualism didn't beat the Nazis. It didn't take us to the Moon. We did that together, America. We need bigger visions that can unite us beyond our narrow partisan desires to get a real mandate.

You know what a real mandate should be? It should be government efficiency. It really should be. God, I heard from so many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle that said if they formed a commission of former executives in this body—I see you, MAGGIE HASSAN. It was hard, but I had to cut 24 percent of my budget, one out of four employees. It was really hard. It would cause a lot of pain. But we had to reduce my government.

There are a lot of people—executives, on both sides of the aisle: Pick me. Pick me.

Let's form the most exciting team possible, because JACK REED knows that the military of the United States of America can do things more efficiently. There is a little bit of waste over there because they haven't passed an audit.

Where is MARIA CANTWELL, of the Commerce Committee? There so many ideas about how to create profit centers in the American Government. You have talked to me about them. You are brilliant on some of these ideas.

I look around here, but I can look to the other side of the aisle. The man, the farmer sitting over there, the guy who has been so good to me, CHUCK GRASSLEY—I forced that man to hug me when we passed.

I forced you to hug me, sir. I have pictures. You can't deny it. I don't know how you will get reelected now. You hugged this Black dude from New Jersey. You are so sweet to me still.

We passed a big bipartisan bill because of people like him, like the Presiding Officer. I met with you. You still have big ideas. You still have big ideas that aren't partisan.

If President Trump, from his inaugural address to his first speech before the joint session of Congress, had said: Enough. There are big ideas in this country. I want the best. I want people to come together. I am tired of us talking down at each other. It is time for us to come together and imagine ways to create real abundance in America for all Americans. I trust the genius of America, the kindness and the decency.

But this President doesn't do that. He violates all of our common senses of decency.

Don't say it doesn't happen, folks. Don't say that. I listen to him. I listen to how he talks about people. We have a government now, as I said earlier, that isn't: Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. We have a country now where a President says: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for Donald Trump.

You are seeing who gets the special treatment. Some law firms are really threatened right now with being bankrupted by Donald Trump targeting them. Others have decided a different path. I am hating them because they said: We are going to go to Trump and offer him what he wants. We are going to give him tens of millions of dollars of free pro bono work.

I wish they would bring that free pro bono work to Newark. A lot of people need lawyers—folks in my city.

What are the standards here of our government? Do you want a merger? Well, maybe you should put a lot of money in Donald Trump's meme coin. I read the document. There is something called emoluments. And we sit by and act like it is no big deal.

He made millions and millions of dollars—from whom, we don't know. We haven't held one hearing of oversight to know who is giving him millions of dollars for that meme coin. Is it the Turks, the Saudis? Is it the Chinese? Is it the Russian oligarchs? Do we know? Should we know?

Yes, America. Stop falling into tribal lanes and closing your eyes to things that should not be normalized. Why are we normalizing these things? They are wrong. They are patently, on the face of it, wrong.

If you use Signal to discuss a military attack, the time of the attack, the weapons that are going to be used, and you do it on a commercial app and decide to include a reporter, there should be accountability. Am I crazy?

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ladies and gentlemen, let me just remind you, expressions of approval and disapproval are not permitted by the Gallery. Thank you.

Mr. BOOKER. He was forced to say that.

Look at you defying.

The Senate and the House should be checks and balances on the President of the United States. The Senate and the House should not allow business as usual in this moment. When the President is insisting that no one has the power to check and balance him, when a judge does it, when a judge decides on the soundness of his legal observations to have a ruling and then the President of the United States doesn't appeal the ruling, like most people kind of do, but starts to drag and insult and threaten that judge with impeachment—and some people, astonishing to me, in our government, said: Oh, that is right. We should impeach this guy.

That is not a question of left or right. That is a question of right or wrong. We are normalizing this behavior. We are letting him do things that Republicans and Democrats should say together are wrong.

So I want to say—I am going to stop soon.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. BOOKER. God bless you.

I will yield for a question while retaining the floor.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I want to start, before I get to my question, by just saying how proud I am of you and how proud we all are of you. I think I am old enough to remember Strom Thurmond's filibuster. I can remember being in high school and seeing the news every night and the reporters coming from the steps of the Capitol because they were filibustering the civil rights bill. What I am proud of is that your focus on democracy and the opportunities that democracy opens up for all of our rights, in my mind, cancels out what Strom Thurmond did to prevent African Americans and others from getting the rights they deserve in this country. So I am proud of that.

(Applause.)

You talked earlier this afternoon about the rule of law and the overreach of this administration. As part of that, you went through a litany of Agencies that Congress had established that this President is trying to take away. I just want to point out that—and you mentioned this earlier—one of those Agencies that Congress established is the U.S. Agency for International Development, and earlier today, we had a shadow hearing roundtable—the Democrats on the Foreign Relations Committee. It was on the dangerous consequences of funding cuts to U.S. global health programs. I know that, as ranking member on the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy, you would have really been interested in this. I am glad you were here on the floor, but I wish you could have heard what we heard from the people who testified.

We heard from Atul Gawande, who used to be the Assistant Administrator of USAID—of their global health program. We heard from Dan Schwarz, the Vice President of Management Sciences for Health. That is a contractor who works on global health programs. And we heard from Nick Enrich, who is the former Assistant Administrator for Global Health at USAID.

They started out by talking about what global health has accomplished through USAID. PEPFAR has saved more than 26 million lives. It has reversed the spread of HIV/AIDS. They have done malaria prevention and control for over a half a billion people. They have eradicated smallpox and eliminated most of polio. They have reduced infant mortality by more than 59 percent since 1990. They have supported cholera, measles, and Ebola outbreak response.

One of the things Dr. Gawande pointed out was that they took the response to the Ebola outbreak from 2 weeks—many of us remember that during the Obama administration when Ebola was coming to the United States. They took that response from 2 weeks down to 24 to 48 hours to be in there in responding to the Ebola epidemic.

And what has this President done? What have Elon Musk and DOGE done? They have gone into USAID. They have cut the global health workforce from

over 800 to about 60. They have taken the system that was designed to make programs more efficient, and they have dismantled it. When the inspector general, Paul Martin, reported on food rotting in ports, he was fired.

USAID has been the largest civilian ground force to address global goals. As Dr. Gawande said, what we learn from USAID is that prevention is a whole lot more efficient and a lot cheaper than emergency treatment. He said that what we spend on global health through USAID has been \$9 a household in America in a year—\$9. Think about what we have done with that \$9.

As they were going through the litany of programs that have been cut, the one that caught my eye was that 75 percent of the pandemic threat comes from diseases jumping from animals to humans. That program has been terminated—75 percent of the threat of future pandemics.

So, as we think about the rule of law and the overreach of this President, would you agree with me that there has been no consultation with Congress about any effort to move USAID into the Department of State and that, because Congress created this Agency, Congress has got to be involved in re-authorizing whatever comes next and that this President and his DOGE boys need to understand that before they take any more steps at USAID?

Mr. BOOKER. Yes. Yes. Yes.

You and I both know, in a bipartisan way, we created some of these programs principally to keep America safe. Many of us remember that dramatic hearing when Trump's Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, sat before the American people, and they were discussing the budgets for USAID and the State Department. James Mattis knew the power of those programs to keep us safe.

You mentioned infectious diseases. We live in a world where infectious disease anywhere is a threat to public health everywhere. So pulling our scientists out of the fight against Ebola and pulling our scientists out of the drug-resistant tuberculosis fight makes no sense.

Then, in terms of our safety, he just simply said: If you cut these programs, buy me more bullets because our fights are to spread democracy. There are nations in Africa, for example, where the Chinese are trying to influence a different way of life. That is why so many African countries now won't criticize China for things that the rest of the world says are bad. It is because they owe them so much debt that they are so engaged, and they are so overplaying the fact.

CHRIS COONS said something. I think it was CHRIS COONS who said something painful earlier about Myanmar—this horrific thing. America is the most generous country on the planet. When there is a crisis, we lead the rest. I have sat in meetings in a bipartisan way with Ambassadors from other countries, where we had the moral au-

thority to tell them: You are not doing enough.

In the Myanmar crisis right now, as CHRIS COONS said, Who is standing there? Not Americans. We don't have the capacity anymore to help with a crisis like that, but the Chinese Government is there.

Again, it is what defines us. I keep saying this is not a left-right moment; this is a moral moment, and we tell our truth with what we do with our resources. Here is the thing: When you poll people and ask them how much money we spend on USAID, they say: Oh, it must be 10 percent of the American budget or it must be 5 percent of the American budget.

It is around 1 percent or less. A penny of what tax dollars you send down to Washington goes to help us to make sure that around the globe we are countering the hard power of some countries with the power of our light and our soft power. We have been the envy of the world, where people see and know how special America is because we live with the value of every major religion. We are going to love our neighbors. We are going to be there for you in your times of need.

We all know, with a terrorist group far away and through the most horrific attack, that in a lot of these countries terrorist groups are trying to counter the democratic governments there. Look at the Sahil region. Look what is happening. When I was in Niger, I was shocked to hear what they were talking about—of instabilities in the north, threats of terrorism in the north.

I am going to go for 7 more minutes and stop, but I want to use these last 7 minutes to return one more time to the people of my State and, actually, other States who demand that we do things differently and who ask for help.

Before I do, I just want to thank MIKE LEE today. He is my partner in antitrust—a specialty of my friend AMY KLOBUCHAR.

I don't know if you got my text—you got it?—where I said to you: Uh, I am kind of going to the floor to hold it for as long as I can, and I may not make our first subcommittee together on antitrust where we have a lot of common ground. So I am sorry I missed it today, but I know my friend will fill me in. So thank you.

I want to close back where we started about us and about why I am here.

I believe that there is an urgent crisis in our country that we are not talking about. It is not a left-right crisis; it is a right-wrong crisis. It is a moral moment again in America that is going to define our character about who we are and what we stand for. There is a threat to the bedrock commitments we have made to each other as a country.

People are threatening that bedrock commitment of Social Security. They are calling it a Ponzi scheme. They are making up absolute lies about it. I read American after American who said that that is their lifeline. They told stories that they don't get their Social

Security payments or they get caught up because nobody is answering their calls. Of the rural Social Security office, I read States red and blue where they are closing Social Security offices. If I now have to drive 100 miles or 150 miles at 93 years old, it doesn't make sense. One of my colleagues stood up here and said it is already cutting benefits if you can't access the folks.

I stood here because it is a threat to these bedrock commitments—the bedrock commitment we have made in healthcare in this country.

We won the defense of the Affordable Care Act, but my colleagues know, when you start talking about Medicaid, that is not 20-plus million Americans. It is 70, 80, 90 million Americans. It is our elders in nursing homes. It is our children with disabilities. It is our moms giving birth who are still giving birth in the country with the highest maternal mortality rates in the industrial world.

It is a moral moment. Who do we stand for?

Senator SCHUMER shocked me when they said they were going to use some kind of budget gimmick to push this through.

You shocked me, CHUCK.

I thought this was going to come down to the Parliamentarian, but it doesn't sound like it now. It is just going to get dumped with the math that I read. The Manhattan Institute criticized it on the right. AI criticized it on the right. So what are you doing? What are you doing, America? You are going to rack up trillions and trillions of dollars in debt that our children and our children's children are going to have to pay for in passing the bucks that will grow.

Are you doing that to help people get more access to healthcare and more access to retirement security and more access to the things we believe in? I think of ideas like universal childcare and paid family leave. No. We are doing that in order to renew the tax cuts that I read of conservative budget folks, moderate budget folks—all across the spectrum—who said it will blow up our deficit, and the benefits of those tax cuts—not all. Let's not use hyperbole. But most will go—most will go to the richest people in our country, who I promise you—I celebrate people who brought their ingenuity and their expertise and their grit and their tireless work who have built wealth in this country. It should not be us versus them, but I am telling you that those folks do not need another tax cut.

The corporations that came here, and you all remember, that said: We would like a 25-percent rate. The people I read said that when we kicked it to 21—not even what they were asking for, which was for 25—it exploded. It is one of the main reasons it exploded our debt.

We read from conservative groups who just said that all of these promises that we would grow our way out of our deficit didn't materialize. All of the

promises that were made, Trump, for those who don't remember and weren't here when I read it, was going around, telling folks: Oh, my tariffs—this is 2017. The money that I get will be what we will use to pay down the debt. The math that they did would account for about 1/750th of the debt at that time, but he used that money to try and compensate the farmers who he was hurting with his tariffs.

This is a moral moment and people are getting hurt and people are afraid because of the threats to Medicaid cuts. There are people writing in who said \$880 billion would devastate me, but even small cuts to services—my whole family's fragile architecture of our finances—if you just pull out the transportation money that my disabled child uses, that will crumble my financial world.

So, when you talk about the bigger cuts, we know the math. Many States that expanded Medicaid have a trigger, that if it goes below 90 percent, all the Medicaid Expansion goes off in that State, and millions of Americans will be hurt. That is not right, guys. That is not right. So these are the choices before us—our veterans and the VA.

I am mad at you now as you made me get very emotional with your story.

We read John McCain's story. We read the stories of the poems of the unknown soldier looking over us and saying: What are you doing to the Gold Star families? What are you doing to the veterans? Are you living up to your promises that you made? Well, right now, there are cuts of tens of thousands. There are 80,000 veterans who work for the VA, but there are even more because about 20 percent or so who are Federal workers are also veterans.

We read stories from veterans in America who are shaken by what is happening, who are losing their jobs. Yet all they want to do is serve. They are not what they are being called. They are not leeches. They are not criminals. They shouldn't be degraded for wanting to serve their Nation.

This is what we are talking about: Our veterans, our seniors, our healthcare, our financial security going forward.

I asked the question to all those people who voted for Donald Trump who believed in him that he would lower your grocery prices. I ask you: Look at your financial self. Are you better off than you were 72 days ago financially?

The answer, for most people who believe in him, is no, because he didn't set out to do anything to lower prices. He set out to rename the Gulf of Mexico, to threaten Canada, to say I am going to take over Greenland. He has done a lot of things—140 Executive orders. Many of them actually drive up your costs, make it more expensive to enroll in the ACA, reduce a lot of the tax credits there.

He has increased your costs. He has taxed your bedrock services. The stock market tumbles. Your 401(k) accounts

are less. Inflation is up. Consumer confidence is down. These are the voices we brought into this Chamber, the voices of all of our constituents—red States, blue States—the voices of Democrats, Republicans, Republican Governors, Democratic Governors. We brought all of the people who are saying no, this is a moral moment, not left or right, right or wrong.

So I have tried over the last 25 hours and 1 minute to center the conversation back on what will we do in good consciences.

People who are saying, I served this country, I risked my life, shouldn't I be able to keep my job?

People are saying this country once made itself the envy of the world because we invested in high-quality education for every child. I don't like what is going on, the end of the Department of Education.

People are saying I worked harder than I ever have, but the prices on everything in my life are getting higher.

People who are saying that the America I learned about in school, the one where people's rights are protected, the people are saying why are we yet again going through another healthcare battle, threatening millions of people.

People are saying that I am worried about the financial security and the future of my country. The voices of folks.

So I end by saying simply this: Where I started was John Lewis. I don't know how to solve this. I don't know how to stop us from going down this road.

CHUCK SCHUMER has now told me that they are greasing the skids to do these things. I am sorry, but I know who does have the power—the people of the United States of America. The power of the people is greater than the people in power.

It is time to heed the words of the man I began this whole thing with, John Lewis. I begged folks to take the example of his early days, where he made himself determined to show his love for his country at a time when the country didn't love him, to love this country so much, to be such a patriot that he endured beatings savagely on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, at lunch counters, on Freedom Rides.

He said he had to do something. He would not normalize a moment like this. He would not just go along with business as usual. He wouldn't know how to solve it.

But there is one thing that he would do that I hope we all can do, that I think I did a little bit of tonight. He said for us to go out and cause some good trouble, necessary trouble, to redeem the sole of our Nation.

I want you to redeem the dream. Let's be bold in America, not demean and degrade Americans, not divide us against each other. Let's be bolder in America, for the vision that inspires with hope, that starts with the people of the United States of America.

That is how this country started, we the people. Let's get back to the ideals

that others are threatening. Let's get back to our Founding document that those imperfect geniuses had some very special words at the end of the Declaration of Independence. It was one of the greatest in all of humanity, the Declaration of Interdependence, when our Founders said we must mutually pledge, pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. We need that now from all Americans.

This is a moral moment. It is not left or right, it is right or wrong. Let's get in good trouble.

(Ms. LUMMIS assumed the Chair.)

My friend, Madam President, I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

Madam President, thank you to the pages. Thank you to the Parliamentarian staffs. Thank you to the clerks. Thank you to the doorkeepers. There were so many people who make this place special. I kept you up all night. I kept you up 24 hours. I just want to say thank you. Thank you, everybody.

(Applause.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, is the next regular order of business the confirmation of Mr. Matthew Whitaker?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Order in the Senate, please. Order in the Galleries.

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, is the next regular order of business the confirmation of Mr. Matthew Whitaker to be NATO? Is that next order of business up?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is.

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that myself and the Senator from Iowa be permitted to speak each 3 minutes, and immediately upon conclusion of that, we proceed to the vote on the confirmation.

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

Mr. RISCH. I yield the floor to the Senator from Iowa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will be order in the Senate. Senators and visitors will take their conversations out of the Chamber.

The Senator from Iowa.

NOMINATION OF MATTHEW WHITAKER

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, today, I rise in support of the confirmation of Matt Whitaker to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to NATO.

Matt is not only a proud Iowan, he is a dedicated public servant, an accomplished leader, a loving father, and a very, very, dear friend.

Matt has honorably served our State and our country as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Iowa in private practice and most recently as the former Acting Attorney General of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator yield?

Ms. ERNST. Yes, I will, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order.

Please, Senators, take your conversations off the floor.

The Senator from Iowa may proceed.

Ms. ERNST. Matt and I first crossed paths during the 2014 U.S. Senate primary in Iowa. What began as opponents in a race turned into a mutual respect and, ultimately, a strong friendship.

Since 2014, Matt has supported me in countless ways, offering wise counsel and keen insight on the issues facing our State, Nation, and our world today.

While some may just brush it off as "Iowa nice," I believe this is a clear demonstration of Matt's character. He is willing to put differences aside, strengthen relationships, and put our country over politics.

Over the last few years, during exchanges with NATO allies, a consistent theme emerged—the need for American leadership, a willingness to speak hard truths and encourage our partners to step up.

Matt's experience has prepared him for this aspect of the job. With decades of law enforcement experience and having served as Acting Attorney General, Matt has successfully collaborated across many organizations and jurisdictions.

He understands the evolving threats our Nation and our allies face from terrorism to cyber warfare to transnational crime.

His experiences navigating complex security challenges will make him an asset to NATO and a force for strengthening our alliances.

Matt Whitaker is a principled leader with a proven track record. Under President Trump's peace-through-strength approach, I have no doubt that Matt will be an effective advocate for America's interests and a champion of our national strategy.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination. He is the right leader at the right time for this critical role.

I yield to the gentleman from Idaho.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, I rise today in support of President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to NATO, Mr. Matthew Whitaker.

First, the good news. NATO remains more than ever relevant to the security of the United States and to Europe. NATO is stronger today than it has ever, ever been.

Putin made a horrible mistake when he attacked Ukraine thinking he would split NATO. He did not split NATO. He made it stronger. Indeed, we added two additional nations to NATO, and Putin has picked up another 800 miles of border with NATO.

Now the concern: Unfortunately, some NATO members have taken the alliance and America's support of it for granted. Our European allies have let the heavy financial lifting to us, and by many of their own admissions, have not pulled their weight in defense spending.

Dramatic investment from NATO members in our collective defense is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Whitaker, as our next Ambassador to NATO, will help President Trump preserve the fidelity, commitment, and integrity of NATO. He will encourage our allies to rise to meet the challenges of an increasingly dangerous world, and he will help our allies understand that this must be a true partnership. It is a tough job.

I urge my colleagues to support Mr. Whitaker as he takes on this challenge as our next U.S. Ambassador to NATO.

Madam President, I ask the Senate execute the order of March 27 with respect to the Whitaker nomination.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew Whitaker, of Iowa, to be United States Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

NOMINATION OF MATTHEW WHITAKER

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, the Senate will soon vote to confirm my good friend and fellow Iowan Matt Whitaker to be the U.S. Ambassador to NATO.

I support his nomination and urge all my colleagues to vote for his confirmation. Matt is someone who is well known back in Iowa, and he has earned the respect of many here in Washington, too.

He has a long record of service to our country, from his time as Acting Attorney General in the first Trump administration to his work as chief of staff at the Department of Justice.

He has traveled around the world, meeting with leaders on important issues, including dealing with the fentanyl crisis and negotiating with Chinese officials.

During the George W. Bush administration, Matt served our State as U.S. attorney for the Southern District from 2004 to 2009, where he worked hard to keep our communities safe.

In Iowa, he is known not just for his work, but for his deep pride in his home State. He never lets you forget that he is a proud graduate of the University of Iowa, where he earned his undergraduate degree, MBA, and law degree.

In fact, he even played football for the Hawkeyes, including going to the Rose Bowl, which speaks to his work ethic and commitment to teamwork.

Matt carries that same commitment and drive in every role he takes on—whether it is on the football field, as a U.S. attorney, or in his leadership in national law enforcement. This dedication is exactly what he will bring to his work with NATO.

I am proud to support a true friend and fellow Iowan who has always shown the highest standards of service to our country. I ask my colleagues to support Matt Whitaker's confirmation.

He will serve with the same passion and energy that he brings to his love of Iowa football, and I have no doubt that he will represent the United States on the world stage with the same level of commitment.

VOTE ON WHITAKER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Whitaker nomination?

Mr. RISCH. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) and the Senator from Missouri (Mr. SCHMITT).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 45, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 157 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Banks	Graham	Mullin
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hoeven	Ricketts
Britt	Husted	Risch
Budd	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Capito	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Justice	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cornyn	Lankford	Sheehy
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Crux	McConnell	Tuberville
Curtis	McCormick	Wicker
Daines	Moody	Young
Ernst	Moran	
Fischer	Moreno	

NAYS—45

Alsobrooks	Heinrich	Reed
Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Blunt Rochester	Kelly	Schiff
Booker	Kim	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Slotkin
Coons	Klobuchar	Smith
Cortez Masto	Lujan	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Markey	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warnock
Fetterman	Murphy	Warren
Galleo	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Hawley	Murray	Schmitt
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am here for the 35th time to call attention to the rightwing scheme to capture our courts and justice system, now out to target and persecute Trump political enemies and do Trump political favors.

We have heard a lot about weaponization of the justice system from Trump and his allies. That is for two reasons. One, it is a handy narrative for Trump and MAGA cronies to

paint him as a victim, not a convicted criminal who only dodged proper sentencing and further criminal charges because of sweeping Presidential immunity granted by a Supreme Court stacked with rightwing Justices he appointed. Two, it is a tactic. For would-be autocrats, accusations signal intentions. You accuse the other side of doing what you are plotting so that when you are caught doing it, you have set it up to look like offsetting penalties. Accusations signal intentions, and sure enough, now there is real weaponization of the justice system unfolding before our eyes.

I am going to take a minute and drill down into one episode. It begins with a climate fund, duly created and appropriated by Congress, maintained after the funds were disbursed at a private bank, and overseen by EPA.

But MAGA's dear leader claims, falsely, that climate change is a hoax. That is his catchphrase for the truest things he doesn't like. So this climate fund became a MAGA target. There is a problem, however: The Constitution limits the President's veto power over congressional spending, both with a time limit and the right of Congress to override, and the time limit to veto these funds had been over for years. The funds were properly appropriated back in August 2022 when President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act. The grants were awarded in April 2024, giving recipients legal rights to the funds. And then they were distributed to the bank as fiscal agent for the recipients, all in regular order.

Enter Trump's corrupt Justice Department through two colossal Trump suck-ups: the Acting Deputy Attorney General, Emil Bove, and Ed Martin, the interim U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

Martin is an activist MAGA type, a lawyer for January 6 attackers, who had criticized this fund even before he was appointed interim.

Bove and Martin cooked up asking Martin's U.S. Attorney's Office to freeze the climate fund by opening a criminal investigation so they could assert that the ongoing investigation justified the freeze. Their problem: They couldn't point to a crime. Oops.

The career criminal division chief, an experienced veteran prosecutor at the U.S. Attorney's Office, pointed out that launching a criminal investigation without evidence of a crime—what prosecutors call predication—is a violation of prosecutorial ethics and Department of Justice policy.

That warning from the career prosecutors to MAGA Martin is red flag one. But the MAGA U.S. attorney didn't listen to that warning from his career staff. Instead, he demanded that the career criminal chief resign. He forced her out. Well, that is another big red flag—red flag two.

With the criminal division chief out of the way, Martin still couldn't find one staff prosecutor in his office to pursue the matter.

Now, you remember in the Nixon Saturday Night Massacre, they had to fire all the way down to Robert Bork, who became notorious for ultimately doing the dirty deed for Nixon, but here, no Bork. No prosecutor would sign from this big Federal prosecution office. That is red flag three.

Martin then proceeded in his own name alone. That is red flag four. As a former U.S. attorney, I can assure you there is almost always a career attorney's signature on every pleading filed. And bear in mind that Martin is not some rare legal whiz. He had never spent a single day as a Federal prosecutor before he got this gig, and here he was fumbling around by his lone MAGA self.

So—no surprise—when Martin presented his request to the Federal magistrate judge, the judge denied the petition. That is red flag five, and it is a massive, flapping red flag to anyone who has served in a U.S. Attorney's Office.

Federal prosecutors never want this to happen, so they triple-check and backstop every application to ensure that they are ironclad.

In my U.S. Attorney's Office, a Federal judge shooting down one of our warrant applications would have set off internal reviews. That should be what is known in the medical field as a never event. It is a shocker, particularly with the U.S. attorney presenting the petition in person.

Even that series of disasters didn't stop this scheme. Somebody started shopping the case to other U.S. Attorney's Offices, hoping that some other office would try again in a different district.

Well, shopping a case around U.S. attorney's offices, after the matter has been shot down in court, that is red flag six.

It seems that no other U.S. attorney's office has been willing to go before any court with this hot mess, but somehow, a Federal prosecutor down in Florida—Florida—ordered Washington-based FBI agents to start questioning EPA employees about the grant program. Well, we are going to find out more about that.

But meanwhile, in a related case, a different Federal judge blew up the EPA Administrator's administrative effort under Trump's Executive orders to freeze these funds, and they defended the freeze with the same pretext that there was fraud that needed to be prevented. Well, the judge asked: Tell me about the fraud. Show me some evidence.

There was none. The judge noted in her decision that, for all the big talk, the administration could produce—her words—"no evidence to support that claim." So a second Federal judge shoots down the scheme. We are up to red flag seven.

Compounding this prosecutive fiasco, both Martin and EPA Administrator Zeldin unleashed a barrage of public comments, flooding the information

zone with public accusations of fraud, the same accusations of fraud that the career U.S. attorney staff rejected and the magistrate judge determined to be unfounded and the judge said DOJ and EPA had offered no evidence to support.

Well, that is a problem. Unfounded accusations of fraud are what lawyers call "defamatory per se." And derogatory public comments about the subject of an investigation is trouble under multiple Department of Justice policies. The administration officials' public comments were out of bounds. I have been a U.S. attorney. You don't get to do that.

Discovery in civil litigation will likely ultimately reveal the depths of the misconduct, the potentially unlawful motive, and their potential liability for their misconduct.

We are not at the end of this yet, but what we see is real weaponization—not MAGA phony claims of weaponization, part of a political propaganda campaign to excuse the criminality of the dear leader.

Here, all these red flags of actual weaponization are flying: internal warnings that the case had no merit, removing officials for disagreement, proceeding without a career attorney, getting shot down by a magistrate judge, case shopping after the disaster, hunting for FBI agents to harass career civil servants for managing properly congressionally appropriated funding, making derogatory public comments—and all without evidence.

Compare that to the Federal criminal cases against Trump. There is no record of internal warnings being ignored that the cases had no merit. There is no removing of officials for disagreeing with the case. No pleading was ever filed without a career attorney signing, just signed by a politico. No application was ever shot down by a judge.

Indeed, the Mar-a-Lago warrants were judicially approved. Despite very aggressive lawyering for Trump, no finding of a prosecutor's violation of Department policy was turned up; no matter had to be case shopped to other districts after falling apart in one district; no harassment by FBI agents with no court pleading to back them up; and no derogatory public comments ever made outside the pleadings the government filed.

Red flag count in the Trump cases: zero. Red flag count in this sorry episode: seven.

If Trump's corrupt DOJ will go through all of this just to grab properly appropriated climate funds, imagine what they are capable of with really bad stuff. We are in store for lots more actual weaponization in the coming months and years under this corrupt administration.

So easy for me to say that this will be continued.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the Whitaker nomination, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 53.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Mehmet Oz, of Pennsylvania, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 53, Mehmet Oz, of Pennsylvania, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, John R. Curtis, Joni Ernst, Mike Crapo, Bill Hagerty, Tommy Tuberville, Roger Marshall, John Boozman, Ron Johnson, Rick Scott of Florida, Steve Daines, Tom Cotton, Todd Young, Mike Rounds, Ted Budd, Pete Ricketts.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and 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.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control

Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES E. RISCH,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 25-21, concerning the Army's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Ecuador for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$64 million. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 25-21

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Ecuador.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment* \$0.
Other \$64 million.
Total \$64 million.

Funding Source: National Funds.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE): None.

Non-Major Defense Equipment: The following non-MDE items will be included: M4A1 rifles; Magpul PMAG M4 magazines; technical manuals; training and support; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Army (EC-B-UAC).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None known at this time.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: None.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: April 1, 2025.

*As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control Act.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION

Ecuador—M4A1 Rifles and Support

The Government of Ecuador has requested to buy M4A1 rifles. The following non-MDE items will also be included: Magpul PMAG

M4 magazines; technical manuals; training and support; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is \$64 million.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of Ecuador, an important force for political stability and economic progress in South America.

The proposed sale will improve Ecuador's capability to meet current and future threats by improving the ability of its armed forces to conduct and execute military operations to counter transnational organized crime.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be determined after case implementation. At this time, the U.S. Government is not aware of any offset agreement proposed in connection with this potential sale. Any offset agreement will be defined in negotiations between the purchaser and the contractor.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to Ecuador.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATION

Mr. RISCH, Madam President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

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

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES E. RISCH,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 25-11, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Government of Philippines for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$5.58 billion. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 25-11

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of the Philippines.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment* \$2.73 billion.
Other \$2.85 billion.
Total \$5.58 billion.

Funding Source: National Funds.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase:

Major Defense Equipment (MDE):
Sixteen (16) F-16 C Block 70/72 aircraft.
Four (4) F-16 D Block 70/72 aircraft.
Twenty-four (24) F110-GE-129D or F100-PW-229 engines (20 installed, 4 spares).

Twenty-two (22) Improved Programmable Display Generators (iPDGs) (20 installed, 2 spares).

Twenty-two (22) AN/APG-83 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Scalable Agile Beam Radars (SABR) (20 installed, 2 spares).

Twenty-two (22) Modular Mission Computers 7000AH (or available mission computer) (20 installed, 2 spares).

Twenty-two (22) Embedded Global Positioning System (GPS) Inertial Navigation Systems (INS) (EGI) with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM) or M-Code capability and Precise Positioning Service (PPS) (20 installed, 2 spares).

Eighty-eight (88) LAU-129 guided missile launchers.

Twenty-two (22) M61A1 anti-aircraft guns (20 installed, 2 spares).

Twelve (12) AN/AAQ-33 Sniper Advanced Targeting Pods (ATP).

Twenty-four (24) Multifunctional Information Distribution System-Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS-JTRS).

One hundred twelve (112) Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs) Air Intercept Missile (AIM)120C-8 or equivalent missiles.

Four (4) AMRAAM guidance sections.

Thirty-six (36) Guided Bomb Unit (GBU)-39/B Small Diameter Bombs Increment 1 (SDB-1).

Two (2) GBU-39 (T-1)/B SDB-1 Guided Test Vehicles (GTV).

Forty (40) AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder missiles.

Thirty-two (32) AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder Captive Air Training Missiles (CATMs).

Four (4) AIM-9X Block 11 Sidewinder guidance units.

Three (3) AIM-9X Block II Captive Air Training Missile (CATM) guidance units.

Sixty (60) MK-82 500-lb general purpose bombs.

Sixty (60) MK-84 2,000-lb general purpose bombs.

Thirty (30) Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) KMU-572 tail kits for GBU-38 or Laser JDAM GBU-54.

Sixty (60) FMU-152 fuze systems.

Thirty (30) MAU-210 Enhanced computer control groups (ECCG) for GBU-50 Enhanced Paveway II (EP II).

Thirty-two (32) MXU-651 air foil groups (AFG) for GBU-50 EP II.

Non-Major Defense Equipment: The following non-MDE items will also be included: AN/ALQ-254 Viper Shield (VS) electronic warfare (EW) or equivalent systems; AMRAAM CATMs; AIM-9X Sidewinder training missiles and active optical target detectors (AOTD); Infrared Search and Track (IRST) systems; Air Combat Maneuvering Instrument (ACMI) range systems; FMU-139 Joint Programmable Fuzes (JPFs); missile containers; AN/ARC-238 radios; AN/APX-127

or equivalent Advanced Identification Friend or Foe (AIFF) Combined Interrogator Transponders (CIT) with Mode 5; KY-58 and KIV-78 cryptographic devices; AN/PYQ-10 Simple Key Loaders (SKLs); KGV-250X cryptographic devices; Scorpion Hybrid Optical-based Inertial Trackers (HOBIT) or Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems II (JHMCS II) helmet mounted displays; night vision devices (NVDs); spare image intensifier tubes; AN/ALE-47 Airborne Countermeasures Dispenser Systems (CMDS); AN/ALE-47 countermeasure processors; AN/ALE-47 sequencer switching units; AN/ALE-47 Control Display Units (CDUs); precision navigation; Joint Mission Planning Systems (JMPS); GPS Antenna System (GAS-1) antenna electronics; Sniper pod pylons; ADU-890 and ADU-891 adapter units, LAU-117 and LAU-88 Maverick launchers, impulse cartridges, chaff, flares, ammunition, and other bomb components; BRU-57 bomb racks; BRU-61 munitions carriage assemblies; MAU-12 bomb racks and TER-9A triple ejection racks; Common Munitions Built-in-Test (BIT) Reprogramming Equipment (CMBRE); Rackmount Improved Avionics Intermediate Shop (RIAIS); Cartridge Actuated Devices/Propellant Actuated Devices (CAD/PAD); targeting systems; aircraft refurbishment after maintenance training; spare and repair parts, consumables and accessories; repair and return support; aircraft, engine, ground, and pilot life support equipment; classified and unclassified computer program identification number (CPIN) systems; pylons, launcher adapters, weapon interfaces, and bomb and ejection racks; fuel tanks; Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory (PMEL) and calibration support; National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) maps and mapping data; ferry and fuel support; classified and unclassified software and software support; classified and unclassified publications, manuals, and technical documentation; facilities and construction support; simulators and training devices; personnel training and training equipment; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (PH-D-SAC); Navy (PH-P-AAB, PH-P-AAC).

(v) Prior Related Cases, if any: None.

(vi) Sales Commission, Fee, etc., Paid, Offered, or Agreed to be Paid: None known at this time.

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology Contained in the Defense Article or Defense Services Proposed to be Sold: See Attached Annex.

(viii) Date Report Delivered to Congress: April 1, 2025.

* As defined in Section 47(6) of the Arms Export Control.

POLICY JUSTIFICATION
Government of the Philippines—F-16
Aircraft

The Government of the Philippines has requested to buy sixteen (16) F-16 C Block 70/72 aircraft; four (4) F-16 D Block 70/72 aircraft; twenty-four (24) F110-GE-129D or F100-PW-229 Engines (20 installed, 4 spares); twenty-two (22) Improved Programmable Display Generators (iPDG) (20 installed, 2 spares); twenty-two (22) AN/APG-83 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Scalable Agile Beam Radars (SABR) (20 installed, 2 spares); twenty-two (22) Modular Mission Computers 7000AH (or available mission computer) (20 installed, 2 spares); twenty-two (22) Embedded Global Positioning System (GPS) Inertial Navigation Systems (INS) (EGI) with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM) or M-Code capability and Precise Positioning Service (PPS) (20 installed, 2 spares); eighty-eight (88) LAU-129 guided

missile launchers; twenty-two (22) M61A1 anti-aircraft guns (20 installed, 2 spares); twelve (12) AN/AAQ-33 Sniper Advanced Targeting Pods (ATP); twenty-four (24) Multifunctional Information Distribution System-Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS-JTRS); one hundred twelve (112) Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs) Air Intercept Missile (AIM)-120C-8 or equivalent missiles; four (4) AMRAAM guidance sections; thirty-six (36) Guided Bomb Unit (GBU)-39/B Small Diameter Bombs Increment 1 (SDB-1); two (2) GBU-39(T-1)/B SDB-1 Guided Test Vehicles; forty (40) AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder missiles; thirty-two (32) AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder Captive Air Training Missiles (CATMs); four (4) AIM 9X Block II Sidewinder guidance units; three (3) AIM-9X Block II Captive Air Training Missile (CATM) guidance units; sixty (60) MK-82 500-lb general purpose bombs; sixty (60) MK-84 2,000-lb general purpose bombs; thirty (30) Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) KMU-572 tail kits for GBU-38 or Laser JDAM GBU-54; sixty (60) FMU-152 fuze systems; thirty (30) MAU-210 enhanced computer control groups (ECCG) for GBU-50 Enhanced Paveway II (EP II); and thirty-two (32) MXU-651 air foil groups (AFG) for GBU-50 EP II. The following non-MDE items will also be included: AN/ALQ-254 Viper Shield (VS) electronic warfare (EW) or equivalent systems; AMRAAM CATMs; AIM-9X Sidewinder training missiles and active optical target detectors (AOTD); Infrared Search and Track (IRST) systems; Air Combat Maneuvering Instrument (ACMI) range systems; FMU-139 Joint Programmable Fuzes (JPFs); missile containers; AN/ARC-238 radios; AN/APX-127 or equivalent Advanced Identification Friend or Foe (AIFF) Combined Interrogator Transponders (CIT) with Mode 5; KY-58 and KIV-78 cryptographic devices; AN/PYQ-10 Simple Key Loaders (SKLs); KGV-250X cryptographic devices; Scorpion Hybrid Optical-based Inertial Trackers (HOBIT) or Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems II (JHMCS II) helmet mounted displays; night vision devices (NVDs); spare image intensifier tubes; AN/ALE-47 Airborne Countermeasures Dispenser Systems (CMDS); AN/ALE-47 countermeasure processors; AN/ALE-47 sequencer switching units; AN/ALE-47 Control Display Units (CDUs); precision navigation; Joint Mission Planning Systems (JMPS); GPS Antenna System (GAS-1) antenna electronics; Sniper pod pylons; ADU-890 and ADU-891 adapter units, LAU-117 and LAU-88 Maverick launchers, impulse cartridges, chaff, flares, ammunition, and other bomb components; BRU-57 bomb racks; BRU-61 munitions carriage assemblies; MAU-12 bomb racks and TER-9A triple ejection racks; Common Munitions Built-in-Test (BIT) Reprogramming Equipment (CMBRE); Rackmount Improved Avionics Intermediate Shop (RIAIS); Cartridge Actuated Devices/Propellant Actuated Devices (CAD/PAD); targeting systems; aircraft refurbishment after maintenance training; spare and repair parts, consumables and accessories; repair and return support; aircraft, engine, ground, and pilot life support equipment; classified and unclassified computer program identification number (CPIN) systems; pylons, launcher adapters, weapon interfaces, and bomb and ejection racks; fuel tanks; Precision Measurement Equipment Laboratory (PMEL) and calibration support; National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) maps and mapping data; ferry and fuel support; classified and unclassified software and software support; classified and unclassified publications, manuals, and technical documentation; facilities and construction support; simulators and training devices; personnel training and training equipment; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and

contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost is \$5.58 billion.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a strategic partner that continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in Southeast Asia.

The proposed sale will enhance the Philippine Air Force's ability to conduct maritime domain awareness and close air support missions and enhance its suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) and aerial interdiction capabilities. This sale will also increase the ability of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to protect vital interests and territory, as well as expand interoperability with the U.S. forces. The Philippines will have no difficulty absorbing this equipment into its armed forces.

The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region.

The principal contractor will be Lockheed Martin, located in Greenville, SC. At this time, the U.S. Government is not aware of any offset agreement proposed in connection with this potential sale. Any offset agreement will be defined in negotiations between the purchaser and the contractor.

Implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional U.S. Government or contractor representatives to the Philippines.

There will be no adverse impact on U.S. defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 25-11

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act

Annex Item No. vii

(vii) Sensitivity of Technology:

1. The F-16 Block 70 weapon system is a fourth generation single-engine supersonic all-weather multirole fighter aircraft and features advanced avionics and systems. It contains the General Electric F110-129D engine, AN/APG-83 radar, digital flight control system, embedded internal global navigation system, Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems (JHMCS) II or Scorpion Hybrid Optical-based Inertial Tracker (HOBIT) with night vision device compatibility, internal and external electronic warfare (EW) equipment, Advanced Identification Friend or Foe (AIFF), Link-16 datalink, operational flight trainer, and software computer systems.

a. General Electric F110-GE-129D and Pratt and Whitney F100-PW-229 engines are afterburning turbofan jet engines that power the F-16. Engine spare modules are kits made up of spare engine components including the following modules: inlet fan, core engine, fan drive turbine, augmentor duct and nozzle, and gear box.

b. The Modular Mission Computer (MMC) 7000AHC is the central aircraft computer of the F-16. It serves as the hub for all aircraft subsystems and avionics data transfer.

c. The Improved Programmable Display Generator (IPDG) and color multifunction displays utilize ruggedized commercial liquid crystal display technology designed to withstand the harsh environment found in modern fighter cockpits. The display generator is the fifth generation graphics processor for the F-16. Through the use of state-of-the-art microprocessors and graphics engines, it provides orders of magnitude increases in throughput, memory, and graphics capabilities.

d. The APG-83 Scalable Agile Beam Radar (SABR) is an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar upgrade for the F-16. It

includes higher processor power, higher transmission power, more sensitive receiver electronics, and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), which creates high-resolution ground maps from a greater distance than prior mechanically scanned array radars (e.g., APG-68). The upgrade features an increase in detection range of air targets, increases in processing speed and memory, as well as significant improvements in all modes.

e. The Embedded Global Positioning System (GPS)/Inertial Navigation System (INS) (EGI) with Selective Availability Anti-Spoofing Module (SAASM)—or M-Code receiver when available—and Precise Positioning Service (PPS) is a self-contained navigation system that provides the following: acceleration, velocity, position, attitude, platform azimuth, magnetic and true heading, altitude, body angular rates, time tags, and coordinated universal time (UTC) synchronized time. SAASM or M-Code enables the GPS receiver access to the encrypted P(Y or M) signal, providing protection against active spoofing attacks.

f. The integrated EW suite provides passive radar warning, wide spectrum radio frequency jamming, and control and management of the entire EW system. This system is anticipated to be internal to the aircraft, although mounted pod variants are used in certain circumstances.

g. AIFF Combined Interrogator Transponder (CIT) is a system capable of transmitting and interrogating Mode 5. Mode 4 and Mode 5 anti-jam performance specifications and data, software source code, algorithms, and test plans or reports will not be offered, released discussed, or demonstrated.

h. Multifunction Information Distribution System (MIDS) Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS) is a four-channel software programmable radio for Link-16 digital voice communications and datalink, Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN), and advanced waveforms. Link-16 is a command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) system incorporating high-capacity, jam-resistant digital communication links for exchange of near real-time tactical information, including both data and voice, among air, ground, and sea elements.

i. The Infrared Search and Track System (IRST) is a high resolution, passive, infrared sensor system that searches for, detects, and tracks threats with infrared signatures at long ranges within its field of regard. It functions without emitting any radiation of its own and enables aircrews to detect adversaries before those adversaries see or sense them.

2. The LAU-129 guided missile launcher is capable of launching the Air Intercept Missile (AIM)-9 family of missiles or AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM). The LAU-129 launcher provides the mechanical and electrical interface between the missile and aircraft.

3. The M61 Vulcan Cannon is a six-barreled automatic cannon chambered in 20x120mm with a cyclic rate of fire from 2,500-6,000 shots per minute. This weapon is a hydraulically-powered air-cooled Gatling gun used to damage and destroy aerial targets, suppress and incapacitate personnel targets, and damage and destroy moving and stationary light material targets.

4. The AN/AAQ-33 Sniper Advanced Targeting Pod is a single, lightweight targeting pod for military aircraft that provides positive target identification, autonomous tracking, GPS coordinate generation, and precise weapons guidance from extended standoff ranges. It incorporates a high definition mid-wave forward-looking infrared (FLIR) dual-mode laser, visible-light high definition television (HDTV), laser spot tracker, video data link (VDL), and digital data recorder.

5. AN/ARC-238 radio with HAVE QUICK II is a voice communications radio system which employs cryptographic technology. Other waveforms may be included as needed.

6. The AN/APX-126/127 AIFF CIT is a system capable of transmitting and interrogating Mode 5. The AN/APX-127 is a form, fit, and function refresh of the AN/APX-126 and is the next generation to be produced.

7. The AN/ALE-47 Countermeasures Dispenser System (CMDS) provides an integrated, threat-adaptive, computer-controlled capability for dispensing chaff, flares, and active radio frequency expendables. The system is internally mounted and may be operated as a stand-alone system or may be integrated with other on-board EW and avionics systems. The AN/ALE-47 uses threat data received over the aircraft interfaces to assess the threat situation and determine a response. Expendable routines tailored to the immediate aircraft and threat environment may be dispensed using one of four operational modes.

8. The KY-58 is a secure voice module primarily used to encrypt radio communication to and from military aircraft and other tactical vehicles.

9. The KIV-78 is a cryptographic applique for Identification Friend or Foe. It can be loaded with Mode 5 classified elements.

10. The AN/PYQ-10 Simple Key Loader (SKL) is a handheld device used for securely receiving, storing, and transferring data between compatible cryptographic and communications equipment.

11. The Joint Mission Planning System (JMPS) is a multi-platform, computer-based mission planning system. Its modular suite of systems is tailored to user needs, allowing operators of various aircraft to install modules required for flight planning, weapons delivery planning, post-flight debrief, and operational integration.

12. JHMCS II and Scorpion HOBIT are devices used in aircraft to project information to the pilot's eyes and to aid in tasks such as cueing weapons and aircraft sensors to air and ground targets. These systems project visual targeting and aircraft performance information on the back of the helmet visor, enabling the pilot to monitor information without interrupting field of view through the cockpit canopy. This provides improved capability in close combat targeting and engagement.

13. The AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder missile is a short-range air-to-air missile with a high off-boresight seeker, enhanced countermeasure rejection capability, low drag/high angle of attack airframe, and the ability to integrate a Helmet Mounted Cueing System (HMCS). This potential sale will include AIM-9X guidance sections, Active Optical Target Detectors (AOTD), training missiles, Captive Air Training Missiles (CATM), and CATM guidance units.

14. The AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM is a supersonic, air-launched, aerial intercept guided missile featuring digital technology and micro-miniature solid-state electronics. AMRAAM capabilities include look-down/shoot-down, multiple launches against multiple targets, resistance to electronic countermeasures, and interception of high and low-flying and maneuvering targets. This potential sale will include CATM, as well as AMRAAM guidance and control sections.

15. The GBU-39 Small Diameter Bomb Increment 1 (SDB-1) is a 250-lb GPS-aided, small autonomous, day or night, adverse weather, conventional, air-to-ground precision glide weapon with an inertial navigation system and able to strike fixed and stationary re-locatable nonhardened targets from standoff ranges. It is intended to provide aircraft with an ability to carry a high number of bombs. Aircraft are able to carry four SDBs in place of one 2,000-lb bomb.

16. Joint Direct-Attack Munitions (JDAM) consist of a bomb body paired with a warhead-specific tail kit containing a GPS/INS guidance capability that converts unguided free-fall bombs into accurate, adverse weather smart munitions. The JDAM weapon can be delivered from modest standoff ranges at high or low altitudes against a variety of land and surface targets during the day or night. The JDAM is capable of receiving target coordinates via preplanned mission data from the delivery aircraft, by onboard aircraft sensors (i.e., FLIR, radar, etc.) during captive carry, or from a third-party source via manual or automated aircrew cockpit entry.

a. The GBU-38 is a 500-lb JDAM consisting of a KMU-572 tail kit and MK-82 or BLU-111 500-lb bomb body.

b. The GBU-54 Laser Joint Direct Attack Munition (LJDAM) is a 500-lb JDAM which incorporates all the capabilities of the JDAM guidance tail kit and adds a precision laser guidance set. The LJDAM gives the weapon system an optional semi-active laser guidance in addition to the INS/GPS guidance. This provides the optional capability to strike moving targets. The GBU-54 consists of a DSU-38 laser guidance set, KMU-572 tail kit, and MK-82 or BLU-111 bomb body.

17. The MK-82 General Purpose (GP) bomb is a 500-lb, free-fall, unguided, low-drag weapon. The MK-82 is designed for soft, fragment-sensitive targets and is not intended for hard targets or penetrations.

18. The Enhanced Paveway II (EP II) Laser Guided Bomb (LGB) is a maneuverable, all-weather, free-fall weapon that guides to a spot of laser energy reflected off the target. The "enhanced" component is the addition of GPS-aided Inertial Navigation Systems (GAINS) guidance to the laser seeker. Laser designation for the LGB can be provided by a variety of laser target markers or designators. The EP II consists of an MAU-210 enhanced computer control group (ECCG) that is not warhead-specific and a warhead-specific air foil group (AFG) that attaches to the nose and tail of a GP bomb body.

a. (U) The GBU-50 is 2,000-lb GP bomb body fitted with the MAU 210 CCG and MXU-651 AFG to guide its laser designated target.

19. The MK-84 GP bomb is a 2,000-lb, free-fall, unguided, low-drag weapon. The MK-84 is designed for soft, fragment sensitive targets and is not intended for hard targets or penetrations.

20. The FMU-152 or FMU-139 Joint Programmable Fuze (JPF) is a multi-delay, multi-arm, and proximity sensor compatible with general purpose blast, frag, and hardened-target penetrator weapons. JPF settings are cockpit selectable in flight when used with numerous precision-guided weapons.

21. The highest level of classification of defense articles, components, and services included in this potential sale is SECRET.

22. If a technologically advanced adversary were to obtain knowledge of the specific hardware and software elements, the information could be used to develop countermeasures that might reduce system effectiveness or be used in the development of a system with similar or advanced capabilities.

23. A determination has been made that the Philippines can provide substantially the same degree of protection for the sensitive technology being released as the U.S. Government. This sale is necessary in furtherance of the U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives outlined in the Policy Justification.

24. All defense articles and services listed in this transmittal have been authorized for release and export to the Government of Philippines.

TRIBUTE TO KATY HAGAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to recognize Katy Hagan, who has retired after 18 years of service on the staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee. As a budget analyst at the Defense Subcommittee, Katy dedicated her career to the security of our Nation and the well-being of servicemembers and their families. Her attention to detail and excellent analysis ensured that the Congress passed legislation each year to further our Nation's interests and keep our country safe.

Katy Hagan joined the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee in February 2007 under Chairman Ted Stevens and went on to serve under Chairs Inouye, Cochran, Durbin, Shelby, and Tester before I took up the gavel this year. She served each with dedication and performed her duties to the best of her ability. Katy's colleagues over the years attest that her professionalism, analysis, and guidance greatly contributed to every product that the subcommittee produced for the past 18 years.

Katy's expertise in the operations and maintenance appropriation was greatly valued and respected by her colleagues, the services, and all whom were fortunate to work with her. She diligently engaged with each of the services and made smart recommendations based on her extensive information gathering. With each passing year, Katy brought an even greater wealth of institutional knowledge to this appropriation, making outstanding recommendations for each continuing resolution, Senate bill, supplemental, reprogramming action, and enactment.

It is difficult to sum up the gratitude Katy's colleagues hold for the devotion and care she brought to her work. The billions of dollars under her purview throughout her years on the committee were reviewed with a keen eye toward warfighter needs and the best use of taxpayer resources. Her recommendations, leadership, and counsel were greatly valued by her team. She is already deeply missed.

On behalf of all the past chairs, Senators, and staff who have worked with Katy over the years and who know firsthand the importance of her expertise and contributions, I would like to express our appreciation for her service. Katy, we wish you all the best in the next chapter. Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO DUNCAN McDOUGALL

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I rise today to recognize Duncan McDougall, who stepped down as the executive director of the Children's Literacy Foundation after 25 years leading the nonprofit organization that he founded.

Duncan started CLiF in his garage in Waterbury Center, VT, in 1998. His mission was to inspire a love of reading and writing among underserved, at-risk, rural children in Vermont and New Hampshire.

A graduate of Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business, Duncan combined his business experience as a management consultant with his vision to help under-resourced children to make CLiF self-sustaining within its first year of operations. CLiF is proud to be an entirely community-supported organization, through the private donations of more than 600 donors each year and receives no State or Federal funds.

Before starting CLiF, Duncan spent 6 months visiting local communities, talking to people about his idea, and getting their feedback. One of the first board members was a woman who had served as a superintendent in a very small rural school district in northern New Hampshire. Her insights into how CLiF could broaden their impact and what the kids really needed were key. Initially, CLiF considered accepting donations of used children's books to distribute. The former superintendent rejected that idea because the children they were dealing with come from underserved families and always got hand-me-downs. New books would be exciting for these children. She was right.

From the beginning, the board members worked as a genuine team with a hands-on approach. In addition to board meetings, they sorted books, and helped deliver them to rural public libraries; they remained on site, giving presentations and reading from the donated books, as well as engaging the librarians to become part of the process. Through encouragement and guidance from CLiF, public libraries worked with their local schools, something that was new to many of those communities; everyone benefited. When CLiF showed up at a library or community center, the whole town knew about it.

Duncan, after dealing with librarians in these small communities, realized how isolated they were. So he came up with the idea of CLiF hosting a rural librarian's conference that CLiF underwrote; the only cost to the librarians was transportation. Suddenly, these librarians had a community—a real community—to share ideas and support. And that is what CLiF is now: a community-building organization that uses books for kids as a common denominator.

In the early days Duncan would load up his car with donated new books and drive to sites all over Vermont and New Hampshire with free books for children. Since those first days, CLiF has served over 375,000 children in 430 communities and has distributed more than \$10 million in new books. Today, CLiF's community partners offer more than 1,000 literacy events per year in public elementary schools, libraries, preschools, afterschool programs, community centers, low-income housing sites, and correctional facilities, among others. CLiF is a living example of Duncan's belief that change should happen from the ground up. I congratulate Duncan McDougall on a job well done.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO EMILY OSTER

• Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, along with my colleague Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH, we join in honoring Emily Oster, ParentData CEO, best-selling author and data-driven economist whose work eases the minds of both new and experienced parents across the country. We thank her for speaking to the Senate Moms group.

Emily Oster is a data-driven economist and professor of economics at Brown University. She is the author of four books—Expecting Better, the Family Firm, the Unexpected, and Cribsheet—which examine data-driven decision-making from pregnancy, parenting and beyond. Cribsheet earned her a spot as a New York Times best seller.

As CEO of ParentData, Emily translates complex scientific research into answers for some of the most pressing questions parents have. She has helped moms and dads alike dissect panic media headlines and social media claims and avoid hours of late-night-panic-Googleing. In providing clear explanations of detailed data, her work inspires parents to have more confidence about the choices they make on a wide variety of topics from conception to school-aged children. Her efforts make moms especially feel less alone in the concerns they have about doing what is best for their children. Emily lives with her husband and two children.

Our staff led the Senate Moms group, a bipartisan group of more than 200 moms employed by the U.S. Senate. The group's regular meetings and internal resources in the Senate help working moms feel united and supported in navigating the Senate workplace and raising children in the Washington, DC, area.

Thank you, Emily, for your inspiring work to quell the concerns of many Senate moms and giving them the resources that empower the decisions they make about their families every day. You have set an outstanding example for the many working moms who help keep the U.S. Senate functioning day-to-day. We wish you the best in all the future offers you.●

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT WEBER

• Mr. DAINES. Madam President, today I have the distinct honor of recognizing Robert Weber of Park County on his 100th birthday.

Robert was born in Hobson, MT, and he and his brother moved to Paradise Valley when they were young. As a young man, he answered the call to serve our great Nation during World War II, becoming a gunner aboard a B-29 Superfortress bomber and flying missions over Japan.

After the war, he returned to Montana to build a life in Paradise Valley, raising sheep and cattle on a property

neighboring his brother's. He is passionate about the outdoors and was quite the hunter in his day. Robert is a family man and devoted to his daughter Cathy, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren.

It is my distinct honor to recognize Robert Weber for his dedication to his family and country and to mark the momentous occasion of his 100th birthday. Robert's legacy of service and hard work will continue to inspire generations to come. I wish you a very happy birthday, Robert, you make Montana proud.●

TRIBUTE TO TRAVIS PARKER

• Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, we learn a lot about a person by seeing where they choose to spend their time. For Medical Corpsman Travis Parker, he has chosen to give the last 50 years giving back to Alabama's veterans.

After being drafted into the Army, Travis chose to become a medic. He was passionate about combining his medical training with helping soldiers harmed overseas. After completing his training at Fort Sam Houston, Travis was assigned to finish his tour at Fort Rucker. It was there that Travis saw the scars of war firsthand, as he treated soldiers returning home from the Vietnam war.

This experience left a lasting impact on Travis that led him to devote his time serving other veterans and raising awareness to the challenges they face. He decided to make Enterprise his permanent home and has contributed to the Wiregrass in so many ways that it is hard to name them all.

Travis began the "Flags for Forgotten Soldiers" to honor veterans who have lost their lives to suicide. Thanks to his efforts, more than 660 flags have been placed around the area to commemorate the number of veterans that are lost to suicide each month. Travis has also helped make it easier for veterans to go about their daily routines by partnering with the American Legion to build wheelchair ramps in homes and public spaces. And in 2023, Travis helped bring the Traveling Vietnam Wall to Dothan on the 50th anniversary of the ending of the Vietnam war. Travis has helped lead numerous organizations, including AM-VETS Post 7, American Legion Post 82, and his local Vietnam Veterans of America chapter. Travis also founded the Wiregrass Honor Flight Hub and played a key role in launching the Association of Service Agencies (ASA), fostering collaboration among civic, church, and government organizations. Additionally, Travis is helping launch Alabama's first-ever Guitars for Vets chapter. He spearheads numerous other local events to honor our Nation's heroes, including Wreaths Across America, Memorial Day, and 9/11 Patriot Day.

Travis has received numerous awards for his inspiring community service

and veterans' work. Whether it is combating veterans' suicide or teaching veterans how to play the guitar, Travis has played a critical role in reminding Alabama's veterans they are not alone. He reminds us of what an important impact anyone can make on those around you just by showing up and lending a helping hand.

Alabama is blessed to have veterans like Travis who didn't let their service end when they left the military. It is my honor to recognize Travis Parker as the April Veteran of the Month. ●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Hanley, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:21 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 517. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the rules for postponing certain deadlines by reason of disaster.

H.R. 997. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform to the intent of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, as set forth in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference accompanying Conference Report 105-599, that the National Taxpayer Advocate be able to hire and consult counsel as appropriate.

H.R. 998. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require additional information on math and clerical error notices.

H.R. 1152. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the application of the mailbox rule to documents and payments electronically submitted to the Internal Revenue Service.

H.R. 1155. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow taxpayers to elect to receive certain replacement refunds electronically.

H.R. 1234. An act to direct the Librarian of Congress to promote the more cost-effective, efficient, and expanded availability of the Annotated Constitution and pocket-part supplements by replacing the hardbound versions with digital versions.

ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

At 2:47 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled joint resolution:

H.J. Res. 25. Joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Internal Revenue Service relating to "Gross Proceeds Reporting by Brokers That Regularly Provide Services Effectuating Digital Asset Sales".

The enrolled joint resolution was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

At 3:17 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1491. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the postponement of certain deadlines by reason of disasters applicable to the limitation on credit or refund, and to take postponements into account for purposes of sending collection notices.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 517. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the rules for postponing certain deadlines by reason of disaster; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 997. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform to the intent of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, as set forth in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference accompanying Conference Report 105-599, that the National Taxpayer Advocate be able to hire and consult counsel as appropriate; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 998. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require additional information on math and clerical error notices; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 1048. An act to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to strengthen disclosure requirements relating to foreign gifts and contracts, to prohibit contracts between institutions of higher education and certain foreign entities and countries of concern, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

H.R. 1152. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the application of the mailbox rule to documents and payments electronically submitted to the Internal Revenue Service; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 1155. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow taxpayers to elect to receive certain replacement refunds electronically; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 1234. An act to direct the Librarian of Congress to promote the more cost-effective, efficient, and expanded availability of the Annotated Constitution and pocket-part supplements by replacing the hardbound versions with digital versions; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

H.R. 1491. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the postponement of certain deadlines by reason of disasters applicable to the limitation on credit or refund, and to take postponements into account for purposes of sending collection notices; to the Committee on Finance.

PRIVILEGED NOMINATION REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

On request by Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, under the authority of S.

Res. 116, 112th Congress, the following nomination was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Donald Bergin III, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional and Legislative Affairs).

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. LEE, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

Special Report entitled "History, Jurisdiction, and a Summary of Activities of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources During the 118th Congress" (Rept. No. 119-7).

By Mr. PAUL, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:

Special Report entitled "Activities of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs During the 118th Congress" (Rept. No. 119-8).

By Mr. CRUZ, from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, without amendment:

S. 99. A bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to produce a report that provides recommendations to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of Department of Commerce programs related to supply chain resilience and manufacturing and industrial innovation, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 119-9).

By Mr. GRASSLEY, from the Committee on the Judiciary:

Special Report entitled "Activities of the Committee on the Judiciary During the 118th Congress" (Rept. No. 119-10).

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. WICKER for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

*Army nomination of Lt. Gen. Christopher C. LaNeve, to be Lieutenant General.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed Services I report favorably the following nomination lists which were printed in the RECORDS on the dates indicated, and ask unanimous consent, to save the expense of reprinting on the Executive Calendar that these nominations lie at the Secretary's desk for the information of Senators.

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

Air Force nomination of Christopher A. Ridlon, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Mark D. Goodwin, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Carlos J. Ramirez Jimenez, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Jeffrey W. Buckner, to be Colonel.

Army nomination of Shawn P. Polonkey, to be Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Joseph R. Petkus, to be Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Bijan C. Derakhshan, to be Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Jonathan W. Landers, to be Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Christopher L. Junkins, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Andrew M. Adkins and ending with Ian P. Paquette, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Marine Corps nomination of James A. Berry, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Sergio Abreu, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Steven L. Ferwerda, to be Lieutenant Colonel.

Marine Corps nomination of Christopher V. Posadas, to be Major.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with John H. Hildebrandt and ending with Tyler W. Montague, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Marine Corps nomination of Kevin M. Petty, to be Major.

Marine Corps nomination of Carlos L. Figueroa, to be Major.

Marine Corps nomination of Steven A. Tamm, to be Major.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Thomas F. Stone and ending with Michael C. Vanarsdel, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Marine Corps nomination of Austin J. Nelson, to be Major.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Joshua S. Bridges and ending with Jameson R. Hastings, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Jason A. Moore and ending with Patrick S. Webb, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Marine Corps nominations beginning with Jonathan R. Caruthers and ending with Gregory C. Scott, Jr., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on March 14, 2025.

Navy nomination of Brendon B. Watts, to be Lieutenant Commander.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

(Nominations without an asterisk were reported with the recommendation that they be confirmed.)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. MORAN (for himself and Ms. CANTWELL):

S. 1218. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide assistance for cities hosting international sporting events taking place in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. MORENO:

S. 1219. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a deduction for qualified automobile interest; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WELCH, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. KIM, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 1220. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for a Savings Opportunity and Affordable Repayment plan as an income contingent repayment plan; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SCOTT of Florida (for himself, Mr. CRUZ, and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

S. 1221. A bill to prohibit contracting with persons that have business operations with the Maduro regime, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. TUBERVILLE (for himself, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. JUSTICE, and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 1222. A bill to prohibit the Secretary of Labor from constraining the range or type of investments that may be offered to participants and beneficiaries of individual retirement accounts who exercise control over the assets in such accounts; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TUBERVILLE (for himself, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, and Mr. JUSTICE):

S. 1223. A bill to amend the Commodity Exchange Act to prohibit interference in United States digital commodity markets by entities organized or established in a foreign adversary, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. BUDD, Mr. RICKETTS, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. MORENO, Mr. SHEEHY, and Mr. JUSTICE):

S. 1224. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the firearm transfer tax, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BANKS (for himself and Mr. GALLEGOS):

S. 1225. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for certain freedom of association protections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. HAWLEY:

S. 1226. A bill to require the Secretary of the Army to conduct military construction projects to replace military family housing units at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. KELLY, Mrs. BRITT, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. COONS, and Mr. SCHMITT):

S. 1227. A bill to require the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Commissioner of Social Security to review and simplify the processes, procedures, forms, and communications for family caregivers to assist individuals in establishing eligibility for, enrolling in, and maintaining and utilizing coverage and benefits under the Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and Social Security programs respectively, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. RISCH (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CRAPO, and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO):

S. 1228. A bill to amend the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 to modify the cost-sharing requirement for conservation projects carried out by a qualified youth or conservation corps, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 1229. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the clean vehicle credit; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MARSHALL, and Ms. SMITH):

S. 1230. A bill to amend the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 to preserve foreign markets for goods using common names, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Ms. DUCKWORTH (for herself and Mrs. MURRAY):

S. 1231. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide fertility treatment under the TRICARE Program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. KAINE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. LUJÁN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. PADILLA, Ms. SMITH, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. SLOTKIN, Ms. WARREN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. REED, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. COONS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. HEINRICH):

S. 1232. A bill to direct the Secretary of Labor to issue an occupational safety and health standard that requires covered employers within the health care and social service industries to develop and implement a comprehensive workplace violence prevention plan, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, and Mr. KING):

S. 1233. A bill to provide lawful permanent resident status for certain advanced STEM degree holders, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. LANKFORD, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. SCOTT of Florida):

S. 1234. A bill to amend title XVI of the Social Security Act to update the resource limit for supplemental security income eligibility; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, and Mrs. FISCHER):

S. 1235. A bill to direct the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to establish the Foundation for Standards and Metrology, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. FETTERMAN (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 1236. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to require schools to offer a variety of milk to students participating in the school lunch program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Ms. SMITH:

S. 1237. A bill to establish the New Producer Economic Security Program within the Farm Service Agency Office of Outreach and Education; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. PETERS (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. WICKER, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. YOUNG):

S. 1238. A bill to ensure an equitable geographic distribution of projects selected through the Port Infrastructure Development Program; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. FETTERMAN (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. HEINRICH, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. KAINE, Ms.

KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. PADILLA, and Ms. SMITH):

S. 1239. A bill to amend title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to require group health plans and health insurance issuers offering group or individual health insurance coverage to permit enrollees to obtain a 365-day supply of contraceptives; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PADILLA (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. KING, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. REED, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WELCH, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 1240. A bill to repeal an executive order relating to Federal elections, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. GRAHAM (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. BRITT, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. KING, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. KAINE, Mr. CRAMER, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. COTTON, Ms. HASSAN, Mrs. FISCHER, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Ms. ERNST, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. WELCH, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. COONS, Mr. SHEEHY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. KELLY, Mr. HUSTED, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BENNET, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. GALLEGRO, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. SCOTT of Florida, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. JUSTICE, Ms. WARREN, Mr. DAINES, Mr. REED, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. BARRASSO):

S. 1241. A bill to impose sanctions and other measures with respect to the Russian Federation if the Government of the Russian Federation refuses to negotiate a peace agreement with Ukraine, violates any such agreement, or initiates another military invasion of Ukraine, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. WYDEN:

S. 1242. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to carry out watershed pilots, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. REED, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WELCH, Ms. SMITH, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 1243. A bill to ensure high-income earners pay a fair share of Federal taxes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRUZ (for himself and Mr. BANKS):

S. 1244. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow parents of eligible military dependent children to establish Military Education Savings Accounts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. 1245. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand health care and benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for military sexual trauma, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. MARKEY, and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. Res. 149. A resolution designating April 2025 as "Second Chance Month"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Mr. MURPHY):

S. Res. 150. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "Countering International Parental Child Abduction Month" and expressing the sense of the Senate that Congress should raise awareness of the harm caused by international parental child abduction; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Mr. COONS):

S. Res. 151. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the United States should recognize the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as "the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda"; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. KING, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WARNER, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. KELLY, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SMITH, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mr. BENNET):

S. Res. 152. A resolution designating April 2025 as "Preserving and Protecting Local News Month" and recognizing the importance and significance of local news; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. ERNST (for herself, Ms. SMITH, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mrs. BRITT, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. MOODY, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TUBERVILLE, Mr. COONS, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WARNOCK, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. FETTERMAN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. WELCH, Mr. KING, Mr. BENNET, Mr. OSSOFF, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. WICKER, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. WARREN, and Ms. HASSAN):

S. Res. 153. A resolution designating March 27, 2025, as "National Women in Agriculture Day"; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 121

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 121, a bill to extend the statute of limitations for violations relating to pandemic-era programs to be 10 years.

S. 160

At the request of Mr. SHEEHY, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. PADILLA) was added as a cosponsor of S. 160, a bill to amend the Wildfire Suppression Aircraft Transfer Act of 1996 to reauthorize the sale by the Department of Defense of aircraft and

parts for wildfire suppression purposes, and for other purposes.

S. 195

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 195, a bill to amend the Visit America Act to promote music tourism, and for other purposes.

S. 199

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO) were added as cosponsors of S. 199, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide special rules for the taxation of certain residents of Taiwan with income from sources within the United States.

S. 237

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 237, a bill to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide public safety officer benefits for exposure-related cancers, and for other purposes.

S. 243

At the request of Mr. HAWLEY, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Ms. ROSEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 243, a bill to extend the period for filing claims under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act and to provide for compensation under such Act for claims relating to Manhattan Project waste, and to improve compensation for workers involved in uranium mining.

S. 367

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 367, a bill to prohibit the importation, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of .50 caliber rifles, and for other purposes.

S. 380

At the request of Ms. HASSAN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 380, a bill to improve obstetric emergency care.

S. 409

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 409, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for current year inclusion of net CFC tested income, and for other purposes.

S. 445

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 445, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the proper tax treatment of personal service income earned in pass-thru entities.

S. 470

At the request of Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, the name of the Senator from Utah (Mr. CURTIS) was added as a cosponsor

of S. 470, a bill to amend the CARES Act to remove a requirement on lessors to provide notice to vacate, and for other purposes.

S. 502

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 502, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to restore State authority to waive for certain facilities the 35-mile rule for designating critical access hospitals under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 522

At the request of Mr. HAGERTY, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 522, a bill to amend the Federal Credit Union Act to modify the frequency of board of directors meetings, and for other purposes.

S. 525

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. SHEEHY) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) were added as cosponsors of S. 525, a bill to transfer the functions, duties, responsibilities, assets, liabilities, orders, determinations, rules, regulations, permits, grants, loans, contracts, agreements, certificates, licenses, and privileges of the United States Agency for International Development relating to implementing and administering the Food for Peace Act to the Department of Agriculture.

S. 529

At the request of Mr. WARNOCK, the names of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. ALSOBROOKS) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) were added as cosponsors of S. 529, a bill to limit cost-sharing for prescription drugs, and for other purposes.

S. 567

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 567, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the First Rhode Island Regiment, in recognition of their dedicated service during the Revolutionary War.

S. 780

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 780, a bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to address certain issues relating to the extension of consumer credit, and for other purposes.

S. 873

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 873, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to preserve and recapitalize the fighter aircraft capabilities of the Air Force and its reserve components, and for other purposes.

S. 883

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from

Ohio (Mr. HUSTED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 883, a bill to amend the Natural Gas Act to allow the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve or deny applications for the siting, construction, expansion, or operation of facilities to export or import natural gas, and for other purposes.

S. 948

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGOS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 948, a bill to reauthorize the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and for other purposes.

S. 951

At the request of Ms. SMITH, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM) was added as a cosponsor of S. 951, a bill to revise sections 552, 1461, and 1462 of title 18, United States Code, and section 305 of the Tariff Act of 1930 (19 U.S.C. 1305), and for other purposes.

S. 978

At the request of Mrs. MOODY, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 978, a bill to amend the National Housing Act to establish a mortgage insurance program for first responders, and for other purposes.

S. 1032

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the names of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) and the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1032, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay for disability retirees with combat-related disabilities, and for other purposes.

S. 1056

At the request of Mr. ROUNDS, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1056, a bill to establish a home-based telemental health care grant program for purposes of increasing mental health and substance use services in rural medically underserved populations and for individuals in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations.

S. 1110

At the request of Mr. HUSTED, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BUDD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1110, a bill to require the use of artificial intelligence to review agency regulations, and for other purposes.

S. 1154

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1154, a bill to provide protections for employees of, former employees of, and applicants for employment with Federal agencies, contractors, and grantees whose right to petition or furnish information to Congress is interfered with or denied.

S. 1186

At the request of Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, the name of the Senator from New

Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1186, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to apply prescription drug inflation rebates to drugs furnished in the commercial market and to change the base year for rebate calculations.

S.J. RES. 24

At the request of Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 24, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants: Rubber Tire Manufacturing".

S.J. RES. 37

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 37, a joint resolution terminating the national emergency declared to impose duties on articles imported from Canada.

S.J. RES. 44

At the request of Mrs. MOODY, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 44, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Energy relating to "Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Commercial Refrigerators, Freezers, and Refrigerator-Freezers".

S. RES. 66

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. KIM) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 66, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of "Career and Technical Education Month".

S. RES. 147

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 147, a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that Congress should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the Federal Government and is not subject to privatization.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. THUNE (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. MARSHALL, and Ms. SMITH):

S. 1230. A bill to amend the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 to preserve foreign markets for goods using common names, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1230

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Safe-guarding American Food and Export Trade Yields Act of 2025” or the “SAFETY Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. PRESERVING FOREIGN MARKETS FOR GOODS USING COMMON NAMES.

(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—Section 102 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5602) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “As used in this Act—” and inserting “In this Act:”;

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (2) through (8) as paragraphs (3), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), and (4), respectively, and reordering accordingly;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

“(2) **COMMON NAME.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term ‘common name’ means a name that—

“(i) is ordinarily or customarily used for an agricultural commodity or food product;

“(ii) is typically placed on the packaging and product label of the agricultural commodity or food product;

“(iii) with respect to wine—

“(I) is—

“(aa) ordinarily or customarily used for a wine grape varietal name; or

“(bb) a traditional term or expression that is typically placed on the packaging and label of the wine; and

“(II) does not mean any appellation of origin for wine listed in subpart C of part 9 of title 27, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor regulations); and

“(iv) the use of which is consistent with standards of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

“(B) **EXAMPLES.**—The following names shall be considered common names under subparagraph (A):

“(i) With respect to food products:

“(I) American.

“(II) Asiago.

“(III) Basmati.

“(IV) Black forest ham.

“(V) Bologna.

“(VI) Bratwurst.

“(VII) Chevre.

“(VIII) Chorizo.

“(IX) Colby.

“(X) Feta.

“(XI) Fontina.

“(XII) Gorgonzola.

“(XIII) Grana.

“(XIV) Gruyere.

“(XV) Kielbasa.

“(XVI) Limburger and Limburgo.

“(XVII) Mascarpone.

“(XVIII) Monterey and Monterey jack.

“(XIX) Mortadella.

“(XX) Munster and muenster.

“(XXI) Neufchatel.

“(XXII) Parmesan.

“(XXIII) Pecorino.

“(XXIV) Pepper Jack.

“(XXV) Prosciutto.

“(XXVI) Ricotta.

“(XXVII) Romano.

“(XXVIII) Salami.

“(XXIX) Swiss.

“(ii) With respect to wine:

“(I) The list of grape varietal terms in section 4.91 of title 27, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation).

“(II) The grape variety designations administratively approved by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau.

“(III) The following nonvarietal descriptors:

“(aa) Chateau.

“(bb) Classic.

“(cc) Clos.

“(dd) Cream.

“(ee) Crusted and Crusting.

“(ff) Noble.

“(gg) Ruby.

“(hh) Sur lie.

“(ii) Tawny.

“(jj) Vintage.

“(kk) Vintage character.

“(iii) With respect to beer:

“(I) Bitter.

“(II) Pale Ale.

“(III) India Pale Ale.

“(IV) Mild.

“(V) Porter.

“(VI) Stout.

“(VII) Barleywine.

“(VIII) Dubbel.

“(IX) Quadrupel.

“(X) Witbier.

“(XI) Saison.

“(XII) Biere de Garde.

“(XIII) Oud Red.

“(XIV) Altbier.

“(XV) Weisse.

“(XVI) Gose.

“(XVII) Hefeweizen.

“(XVIII) Dunkel.

“(XIX) Helles.

“(XX) Rauchbier.

“(XXI) Pilsener.

“(XXII) Maerzen.

“(XXIII) Schwarzbier.

“(XXIV) Doppelbock.

“(XXV) Bock.

“(XXVI) Kellerbier.

“(XXVII) Munchener and Munich style.

“(XXVIII) Oktoberfest.

“(XXIX) Dortmund.

“(XXX) Kolsch and Koelsch.

“(XXXI) Budejovick’e pivo (Budweiser beer).

“(XXXII) Cream.

“(XXXIII) Grodziskie.

“(XXXIV) Jerez and sherry.

“(XXXV) Lager.

“(C) **CONSIDERATIONS.**—In making a determination under subparagraph (A), the Secretary may take into account—

“(i) competent sources, such as dictionaries, newspapers, professional journals and literature, and information posted on websites that are determined by the Secretary to be reliable in reporting market information;

“(ii) the use of the common name in a domestic, regional, or international product standard, including a standard promulgated by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, for the agricultural commodity or food product; and

“(iii) the ordinary and customary use of the common name in the production or marketing of the agricultural commodity or food product in the United States or in other countries.”; and

(4) in paragraph (7) (as so redesignated), in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in clause (v), by striking “or” at the end;

(B) in clause (vi), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(vii) prohibits or disallows the use of the common name of an agricultural commodity or food product of the United States.”.

(b) **NEGOTIATIONS TO DEFEND USE OF COMMON NAMES.**—Title III of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5652 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following: **“SEC. 303. NEGOTIATIONS TO DEFEND THE USE OF COMMON NAMES.**

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall coordinate efforts with the United States Trade Representative to secure the right of United States agricultural producers, processors, and exporters to use common names

for agricultural commodities or food products in foreign markets through the negotiation of bilateral, plurilateral, or multilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding, or exchanges of letters that assure the current and future use of each common name in connection with United States agricultural commodities or food products.

“(b) **BRIEFING.**—The Secretary and the United States Trade Representative shall jointly provide to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, the Committee on Finance of the Senate, the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives a semi-annual briefing on their efforts and success in carrying out subsection (a).”.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. ROUNDS, and Mr. KING):

S. 1233. A bill to provide lawful permanent resident status for certain advanced STEM degree holders, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1233

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Keep STEM Talent Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. VISA REQUIREMENTS.

(a) **GRADUATE DEGREE VISA REQUIREMENTS.**—To be approved for or maintain non-immigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)), a student seeking to pursue an advanced degree in a STEM field (as defined in section 201(b)(1)(F)(ii) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(1)(F)(ii))) (as amended by section 3(a)) for a degree at the master’s level or higher at a United States institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)) must apply for admission prior to beginning such advanced degree program.

(b) **STRENGTHENED VETTING PROCESS.**—The Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State shall establish procedures to ensure that aliens described in subsection (a) are admissible pursuant to section 212(a)(3)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(A)). Such procedures shall ensure that such aliens seeking admission from within the United States undergo verification of academic credentials, comprehensive background checks, and interviews in a manner equivalent to that of an alien seeking admission from outside of the United States. To the greatest extent practicable, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State shall also take steps to ensure that such applications for admission are processed in a timely manner to allow the pursuit of graduate education.

(c) **REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of State shall submit an annual report to the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives detailing the implementation and effectiveness of the requirement for foreign graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in STEM fields to

seek admission prior to pursuing a graduate degree program. The report shall include data on visa application volumes, processing times, security outcomes, and economic impacts.

SEC. 3. LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENT STATUS FOR CERTAIN ADVANCED STEM DEGREE HOLDERS.

(a) ALIENS NOT SUBJECT TO DIRECT NUMERICAL LIMITATIONS.—Section 201(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(F)(i) Aliens who—

“(I) have earned a degree in a STEM field at the master’s level or higher while physically present in the United States from a United States institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))) accredited by an accrediting entity recognized by the Department of Education;

“(II) have an offer of employment from, or are employed by, a United States employer to perform work that is directly related to such degree at a rate of pay that is higher than the median wage level for the occupational classification in the area of employment, as determined by the Secretary of Labor;

“(III) have an approved labor certification under section 212(a)(5)(A)(i); or

“(IV) are the spouses and children of aliens described in subclauses (I) through (III) who are accompanying or following to join such aliens.

“(i) In this subparagraph, the term ‘STEM field’ means a field of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics described in the most recent version of the Classification of Instructional Programs of the Department of Education taxonomy under the summary group of—

“(I) computer and information sciences and support services;

“(II) engineering;

“(III) mathematics and statistics;

“(IV) biological and biomedical sciences;

“(V) physical sciences;

“(VI) agriculture sciences; or

“(VII) natural resources and conservation sciences.”

(b) PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING IMMIGRATION STATUS.—Section 204(a)(1)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1154(a)(1)(F)) is amended by striking “203(b)(2)” and all that follows through “Attorney General” and inserting “203(b)(2), 203(b)(3), or 201(b)(1)(F) may file a petition with the Secretary of Homeland Security”.

(c) LABOR CERTIFICATION.—Section 212(a)(5)(D) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(5)(D)) is amended by inserting “section 201(b)(1)(F) or under” after “adjustment of status under”.

(d) DUAL INTENT FOR F NONIMMIGRANTS SEEKING ADVANCED STEM DEGREES AT UNITED STATES INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding sections 101(a)(15)(F)(i) and 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i) and 1184(b)), an alien who is a bona fide student admitted to a program in a STEM field (as defined in subparagraph (F)(ii) of section 201(b)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1151(b)(1))) for a degree at the master’s level or higher at a United States institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))) accredited by an accrediting entity recognized by the Department of Education may obtain a student visa, be admitted to the United States as a nonimmigrant student, or extend or change nonimmigrant status to pursue such degree even if such alien seeks lawful permanent resident status in the United States.

(2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection may be construed to modify or amend section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) or 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i) or 1184(b)), or any regulation interpreting such authorities for an alien who is not described in this subsection.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 149—DESIGNATING APRIL 2025 AS “SECOND CHANCE MONTH”

Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. MARKEY, and Mrs. CAPITO) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 149

Whereas every individual is endowed with human dignity and value;

Whereas redemption and second chances are values of the United States;

Whereas millions of citizens of the United States have a criminal record;

Whereas hundreds of thousands of individuals return to their communities from Federal and State prisons every year;

Whereas individuals returning from Federal and State prisons have paid their debt for committing crimes but still face significant legal and societal barriers (referred to in this preamble as “collateral consequences”);

Whereas collateral consequences for an individual returning from a Federal or State prison are mandatory and take effect automatically, regardless of—

(1) whether there is a nexus between the crime and public safety;

(2) the seriousness of the crime;

(3) the time that has passed since the individual committed the crime; or

(4) the efforts of the individual to make amends or earn back the trust of the public;

Whereas, for individuals returning to their communities from Federal and State prisons, gaining meaningful employment is one of the most significant predictors of successful reentry and has been shown to reduce future criminal activity;

Whereas many individuals who have been incarcerated struggle to find employment and access capital to start a small business because of collateral consequences, which are sometimes not directly related to the offenses the individuals committed or any proven public safety benefit;

Whereas many States have laws that prohibit an individual with a criminal record from working in certain industries or obtaining professional licenses;

Whereas, in addition to employment, education has also been shown to be a significant predictor of successful reentry for individuals returning from Federal and State prisons;

Whereas an individual with a criminal record often has a lower level of educational attainment than the general population and has significant difficulty acquiring admission to, and funding for, educational programs;

Whereas an individual who has been convicted of certain crimes is often barred from receiving the financial aid necessary to acquire additional skills and knowledge through some formal educational programs;

Whereas an individual with a criminal record—

(1) faces collateral consequences in securing a place to live; and

(2) is often barred from seeking access to public housing;

Whereas collateral consequences can prevent millions of individuals in the United States from contributing fully to their families and communities;

Whereas collateral consequences can have an impact on public safety by contributing to recidivism;

Whereas collateral consequences have particularly impacted underserved communities of color and community rates of employment, housing stability, and recidivism;

Whereas the inability to find gainful employment and other collateral consequences of conviction inhibit the economic mobility of an individual with a criminal record, which can negatively impact the well-being of the children and families of the individual for generations;

Whereas the bipartisan First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–391; 132 Stat. 5194) was signed into law on December 21, 2018, to increase opportunities for individuals incarcerated in Federal prisons to participate in meaningful recidivism reduction programs and prepare for their second chances;

Whereas the programs authorized by the Second Chance Act of 2007 (Public Law 110–199; 122 Stat. 657)—

(1) have provided reentry services to more than 442,000 individuals in 49 States and the District of Columbia since the date of enactment of the Act; and

(2) were reauthorized by the First Step Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–391; 132 Stat. 5194);

Whereas the anniversary of the death of Charles Colson, who used his second chance following his incarceration for a Watergate-related crime to found Prison Fellowship, the largest program in the United States that provides outreach to prisoners, former prisoners, and their families, falls on April 21; and

Whereas the designation of April as “Second Chance Month” may contribute to—

(1) increased public awareness about—

(A) the impact of collateral consequences; and

(B) the need for closure for individuals with a criminal record who have paid their debt; and

(2) opportunities for individuals, employers, congregations, and communities to extend second chances to those individuals: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates April 2025 as “Second Chance Month”;

(2) honors the work of communities, governmental institutions, nonprofit organizations, congregations, employers, and individuals to remove unnecessary legal and societal barriers that prevent individuals with criminal records from becoming productive members of society; and

(3) calls upon the people of the United States to observe Second Chance Month through actions and programs that—

(A) promote awareness of those unnecessary legal and social barriers; and

(B) provide closure for individuals with a criminal record who have paid their debt.

SENATE RESOLUTION 150—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF “COUNTERING INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION MONTH” AND EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT CONGRESS SHOULD RAISE AWARENESS OF THE HARM CAUSED BY INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION

Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 150

Whereas thousands of children have been abducted from the United States by parents, separating those children from their parents who remain in the United States;

Whereas it is illegal under section 1204 of title 18, United States Code, to remove, or attempt to remove, a child from the United States or to retain a child (who has been in the United States) outside of the United States with the intent to obstruct the lawful exercise of parental rights;

Whereas 9,816 children were reported abducted from the United States between 2010 and 2020;

Whereas, during 2023, 1 or more cases of international parental child abduction involving children who are citizens of the United States were identified in 105 countries around the world;

Whereas the United States is a party to the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, done at The Hague, October 25, 1980 (TIAS 11670) (referred to in this preamble as the “Hague Convention on Abduction”), which—

(1) supports the prompt return of wrongly removed or retained children; and

(2) calls for all participating parties to respect parental custody rights;

Whereas the majority of children who were abducted from the United States have yet to be reunited with their custodial parents;

Whereas, in 2023, Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Egypt, Honduras, India, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Montenegro, Peru, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, and the United Arab Emirates were identified pursuant to the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 9101 et seq.) as engaging in a pattern of non-compliance (as defined in section 3 of that Act (22 U.S.C. 9101));

Whereas, between 2015 and 2023, a total of 19 countries were previously identified as engaging in a pattern of non-compliance (as so defined), including Austria, the Bahamas, the People’s Republic of China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Japan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tunisia, showing the importance of continued enforcement of United States law by the executive branch to ensure the return of abducted children;

Whereas the Supreme Court of the United States has recognized that family abduction—

(1) is a form of child abuse with potentially “devastating consequences for a child”, which may include negative impacts on the physical and mental well-being of the child; and

(2) may cause a child to “experience a loss of community and stability, leading to loneliness, anger, and fear of abandonment”;

Whereas, according to the 2010 Report on Compliance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction by the Department of State, an abducted child is at risk of significant short- and long-term problems, including “anxiety, eating problems, nightmares, mood swings, sleep disturbances, and aggressive behavior”;

Whereas international parental child abduction has devastating emotional consequences for the child and for the parent from whom the child is separated;

Whereas the United States has a history of promoting child welfare through institutions, including—

(1) the Children’s Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families of the Department of Health and Human Services; and

(2) the Office of Children’s Issues of the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the Department of State;

Whereas the Coalition to End International Parental Child Abduction, through dedicated advocacy and regular testimony, has highlighted the importance of this issue to Congress and called on successive administrations to take concerted action to stop international parental child abduction and repatriate kidnapped United States children;

Whereas Bring Abducted Children Home, Bring Our Kids Home, iStand Parent Network, and the Coalition to End International Parental Child Abduction have been recognized by the Department of Justice as non-profit organizations specializing in international parental child abduction;

Whereas Congress has signaled a commitment to ending international parental child abduction by enacting—

(1) the International Child Abduction Remedies Act (22 U.S.C. 9001 et seq.);

(2) the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-173; 107 Stat. 1998), which enacted section 1204 of title 18, United States Code; and

(3) the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 9101 et seq.);

Whereas the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 543 (112th Congress), agreed to December 4, 2012, condemning the international abduction of children;

Whereas the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 431 (115th Congress), agreed to April 19, 2018, to raise awareness of, and opposition to, international parental child abduction;

Whereas the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 23 (116th Congress), agreed to April 11, 2019, to raise awareness of the harm caused by international parental child abduction;

Whereas the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 568 (117th Congress), agreed to July 21, 2022, to raise awareness of the harm caused by international parental child abduction;

Whereas the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 115 (118th Congress), agreed to May, 10 2023, to raise awareness of the harm caused by international parental child abduction;

Whereas Congress calls on the Department of State to fully use the tools available under the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014 (22 U.S.C. 9101 et seq.) to negotiate, and make publicly available, bilateral agreements or memorandums of understanding—

(1) with countries not parties to the Hague Convention on Abduction to resolve abduction and access cases; and

(2) regarding open abduction and access cases predating the Hague Convention on Abduction with countries that have thereafter become parties to the Hague Convention on Abduction;

Whereas all 50 States and the District of Columbia have enacted laws criminalizing parental kidnapping;

Whereas, in 2023, the Prevention Branch of the Office of Children’s Issues of the Department of State—

(1) fielded more than 4,600 inquiries from the general public relating to preventing a child from being removed from the United States; and

(2) enrolled more than 3,700 children in the Children’s Passport Issuance Alert Program, which—

(A) is 1 of the most important tools of the Department of State for preventing international parental child abduction;

(B) allows the Office of Children’s Issues to contact the enrolling parent or legal guardian to verify whether the parental consent requirement has been met when a passport application has been submitted for an enrolled child; and

(C) has enrolled a total of over 66,600 children in the program since its inception; Whereas the Department of State cannot track the ultimate destination of a child through the use of the passport issued by the Department of State if the child is transported to a third country after departing from the United States;

Whereas a child who is a citizen of the United States may have another nationality and may travel using a passport issued by another country, which—

(1) increases the difficulty of determining the whereabouts of the child; and

(2) makes efforts to prevent abduction more critical;

Whereas, during 2023, 205 children were returned to the United States, and an additional 119 abduction cases, involving 147 children, were resolved without the children being returned to the United States; and

Whereas, in 2023, the Department of Homeland Security, in coordination with the Prevention Branch of the Office of Children’s Issues of the Department of State, enrolled 341 children in the Prevent Abduction Program, which is aimed at preventing international parental child abduction through coordination with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers at the airport, seaport, or land border ports of entry by intercepting the child before departure: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and observes “Countering International Parental Child Abduction Month” during the period beginning on April 1, 2025, and ending on April 30, 2025, to raise awareness of, and opposition to, international parental child abduction; and

(2) urges the United States to continue playing a leadership role in raising awareness about the devastating impacts of international parental child abduction by educating the public about the negative emotional, psychological, and physical consequences to children and parents victimized by international parental child abduction.

SENATE RESOLUTION 151—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE 1994 GENOCIDE IN RWANDA AS “THE GENOCIDE AGAINST THE TUTSI IN RWANDA”

Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Mr. COONS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 151

Whereas, in 2018, the United Nations General Assembly amended the title of the annual observance of the genocide in Rwanda on April 7 to be the “International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda”;

Whereas United States officials have noted publicly that the genocide in Rwanda was “intended to destroy Tutsi”;

Whereas, on April 7, 2023, Secretary of State Blinken stated, “The U.S. stands with Rwanda . . . in remembering the Tutsi victims of genocide. We also mourn the others who were murdered for their opposition to a genocidal regime.”;

Whereas the United States Integrated Country Strategy for Rwanda (approved March 14, 2022) refers to the “1994 genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group”;

Whereas Rwandan officials, in appropriately opposing genocide denial or revisionism, aptly note that any nomenclature that does not specifically use the phrase

“genocide against the Tutsi” is “ambiguous” and conducive to genocide denial or revisionism;

Whereas the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum notes in its public educational materials on the “genocide in Rwanda” that the victims were “predominantly Tutsi” and that the goal of Hutu extremist leaders was for “Rwandan Tutsis to be exterminated”;

Whereas the United States-based non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch, which played a central role in documenting the genocide in Rwanda and in supporting international efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice, found that the “Tutsi were being targeted for elimination”;

Whereas European diplomats refer to the “genocide against the Tutsi” in public statements;

Whereas, starting in 2022, the Government of the United Kingdom has used the terminology “genocide against the Tutsi”; and

Whereas the United States is the only major country in the world to publicly reject the terminology “genocide against the Tutsi”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the United States should recognize the 1994 genocide in Rwanda as “the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda”;

(2) the Secretary of State should publicly affirm that terminology; and

(3) other types of atrocities occurred alongside the genocide against the Tutsi, and the history of the genocide should clearly affirm the other experiences of mass violence against Rwandans during the same period, including the killings and other violence experienced by Hutus and the Indigenous Twa community, perpetrated by Hutu extremist militias.

SENATE RESOLUTION 152—DESIGNATING APRIL 2025 AS “PRESERVING AND PROTECTING LOCAL NEWS MONTH” AND RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL NEWS

Mr. SCHATZ (for himself, Mr. KING, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WARNER, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. KELLY, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. SMITH, Ms. CANTWELL, and Mr. BENNET) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 152

Whereas the United States was founded on the principle of freedom of the press enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which declares that “Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . .”;

Whereas an informed citizenry depends on accurate and unbiased news reporting to inform the judgment of the people;

Whereas a robust, diverse, and sustainable local news presence leads to civic engagement and the buttressing of democratic norms and practices;

Whereas local news provides vital information on national, State, and local elections to help United States citizens execute their civic responsibility;

Whereas the absence of local news outlets and investigative reporting allows local government corruption and corporate malfeasance to go unchecked;

Whereas local journalists help combat misinformation and disinformation by using

their community knowledge and connections to debunk fraudulent or misleading content;

Whereas local cable franchises routinely provide for public educational and government access channels on their systems that—

(1) offer vital local civic programming that informs communities;

(2) provide news and information not often available on other local broadcast channels or cable;

(3) supplement local journalism; and

(4) at times, are the only source for local news;

Whereas more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of United States citizens trust local news sources;

Whereas, according to researchers at the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism, the United States has lost more than 3,200 local print outlets since 2005;

Whereas, according to recent research—

(1) an average of 2.5 local print outlets are being shuttered every week in the United States;

(2) more than 200 of the 3,143 counties and county equivalents in the United States have no local newspaper at all, creating a news shortage for over 3,500,000 residents of those areas;

(3) of the remaining counties in the United States, more than $\frac{1}{2}$ have only 1 newspaper to cover populations ranging from fewer than 1,000 to more than 1,000,000 residents and $\frac{2}{3}$ have no daily newspaper, with fewer than 100 of these counties having a digital substitute;

(4) more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of all newspapers in the United States have changed owners during the past decade;

(5) as of 2024, just 10 companies, including companies with partial or full ownership by private equity firms and hedge funds, control $\frac{3}{4}$ of all newspapers and more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of all dailies in the United States;

(6) of the surviving 5,595 newspapers in the United States, thousands now qualify as “ghost newspapers”, or newspapers with reporting and photography staffs that are so significantly reduced that they can no longer provide much of the breaking news or public service journalism that once informed readers about vital issues in their communities;

(7) rural counties are among the counties most deeply impacted by the loss of local reporting, as more than 500 of the net loss of nearly 3,200 newspapers that have closed since 2005 are in rural counties; and

(8) researchers at the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism estimate that 279 counties across 32 States are at an elevated risk of becoming news deserts, which would inordinately impact high-poverty areas in the South, Mountain West, and Midwest, and communities with significant Black, Latino, and Native American populations;

Whereas, while overall employment in newspaper, television, radio, and digital newsrooms dropped by roughly 26 percent, or 30,000 jobs, between 2008 and 2020, the plunge in newspaper newsrooms alone was much worse at 57 percent, or 40,000 jobs, during that same time period;

Whereas the number of news employees in the radio broadcasting industry dropped by 26 percent between 2008 and 2020;

Whereas nearly 15,000 media jobs, including jobs in the newspaper industry and broadcasting, were lost in 2024;

Whereas, between January and September 2024, digital-native publications and legacy media outlets laid off approximately 2,500 journalists, and many of those publications shuttered during the last year;

Whereas beat reporting, meaning the day-to-day coverage of a particular field that allows a journalist to develop expertise and cultivate sources, has ceased to be a viable

career for would-be journalists due to the decimation of newsroom budgets;

Whereas requests submitted under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as “Freedom of Information Act requests”), by local newspapers to local, State, and Federal agencies fell by nearly 50 percent between 2005 and 2010, demonstrating a significant drop in the extent to which local reporters request government records;

Whereas, according to the Pew Research Center, newspapers in the United States saw a decline in advertising revenue of almost 60 percent between 2013 and 2023;

Whereas the sponsorship revenue of all-news radio stations dropped by 25 percent between 2019 and 2021;

Whereas there remains a significant gender disparity in newsroom employment, with women comprising approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of staff who are 30 years of age or older;

Whereas women who are local television news anchors and reporters, especially women of color, are often subject to harassment and stalking;

Whereas, across the United States, there are nearly 300 media outlets that primarily serve Black communities, and, in recent years, many of those newspapers have seen—

(1) significant losses in advertising revenue as small businesses in their communities were forced to close; and

(2) declines in circulation due to the closures of businesses in their communities;

Whereas the number of Black journalists working at daily newspapers dropped by 40 percent between 1997 and 2014, more than for any other demographic group, and the exodus of journalists from local news outlets exacerbated by the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and declining news readership and circulation, has been disproportionately borne by Black constituencies;

Whereas the number of print media sources published by and for Native American readers has shrunk dramatically in recent years, from 700 media outlets in 1998 to only 200 in 2018;

Whereas Tribally-owned news outlets are often dependent on Tribal governments for funding, but most of those outlets lack the policy structure necessary to fully protect journalistic independence;

Whereas a 2018 survey by the Native American Journalists Association found that 83 percent of respondents believed that Native press coverage of Tribal government affairs was sometimes, frequently, or always censored;

Whereas there are more than 620 Latino news media outlets in the United States, including more than 275 independently owned print publications, and collectively those news media outlets primarily rely on a declining advertising revenue base;

Whereas the lack of local news impacts communities that speak languages other than English, which are often excluded from national media coverage;

Whereas investments in local journalism have mainly focused on larger media markets, contributing to inequities and a journalistic divide between affluent and low-income communities;

Whereas student journalists, at the college and high school level, have stepped in to play an important role reporting on their local communities despite the lack of educational resources and support;

Whereas the Pew Research Center reports that nearly 1 in 10 statehouse reporters are student journalists;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic took a substantial economic toll on the local news industry, contributing to budget cuts, staff layoffs, and scores of newsroom closures,

from which the industry has yet to fully recover, as epitomized by mass layoffs and closures at several local news outlets in the 50 States and the District of Columbia since 2023;

Whereas PEN America proposed “a major reimagining of the local news space” in its 2019 call-to-action report, “Losing the News: The Decimation of Local Journalism and the Search for Solutions”, and called on society and the Federal Government to urgently address the alarming demise of local journalism; and

Whereas, half a century ago, Congress perceived that the commercial television industry would not independently provide the educational and public interest broadcasting that was appropriate and necessary for the United States, and, informed by an independent report prepared by the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which has since ensured that radio and television include public interest educational and reporting programs using annually appropriated funds: Now, therefore, be it

- Resolved*, That the Senate—
- (1) designates April 2025 as “Preserving and Protecting Local News Month”;
 - (2) affirms that local news serves an essential function in the democracy of the United States;
 - (3) recognizes local news as a public good; and
 - (4) acknowledges the valuable contributions of local journalism towards the maintenance of healthy and vibrant communities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 153—DESIGNATING MARCH 27, 2025, AS “NATIONAL WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE DAY”

Ms. ERNST (for herself, Ms. SMITH, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mrs. BRITT, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CASSIDY, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mrs. HYDE-SMITH, Mr. LANKFORD, Ms. LUMMIS, Mr. MARSHALL, Mrs. MOODY, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RICKETTS, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TUBERVILLE, Mr. COONS, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. WARNOCK, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. FETTERMAN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. LUJÁN, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. WELCH, Mr. KING, Mr. BENNET, Mr. OSSOFF, Ms. ROSEN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. WICKER, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. WARREN, and Ms. HASSAN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 153

Whereas the United States proudly recognizes agriculture as one of the most impactful industries of the United States and acknowledges the countless women who help agriculture prosper both in the United States and abroad;

Whereas there are more than 1,200,000 female agricultural producers in the United States, making up more than 1/3 of the agricultural producers in the United States;

Whereas, in 2022, farms operated by women in the United States sold \$222,000,000,000 in agricultural products, accounting for 36 percent of the total agriculture sales in the United States for that year;

Whereas, in addition to leading farming operations, women working in agriculture

make a difference across the United States in various commodity and industry fields, including research and development, manufacturing, sales and distribution, agricultural education, agribusiness, and advocacy, which extend benefits to individuals across the globe through the international trade of the United States;

Whereas the United States recognizes that women are vital in fostering the next generation of the agricultural workforce by promoting science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and agricultural education and entrepreneurial and community initiatives by serving as mentors for the 4-H Program, the National FFA Organization, the Cooperative Extension System, and numerous postsecondary agricultural science educator programs;

Whereas March is National Women’s History Month; and

Whereas female professionals, instructors, and leaders in the agricultural field should be celebrated for their efforts during National Ag Week, which takes place between March 23 and March 29, 2025: Now, therefore, be it

- Resolved*, That the Senate—
- (1) designates March 27, 2025, as “National Women in Agriculture Day”;
 - (2) recognizes the important role of women in agriculture as producers, educators, leaders, mentors, and more; and
 - (3) encourages all citizens to—
 - (A) recognize women working in agriculture; and
 - (B) praise the significant positive impact those women have on the food resources and the agricultural workforce of the United States by encouraging and empowering women to—
 - (i) enter the agricultural field, which is a high-demand field of work;
 - (ii) cultivate opportunities to lead; and
 - (iii) feed a hungry world.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have seven requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet in open session during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to consider a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10 a.m., to consider a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 10:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

NATIONAL WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE DAY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 153, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 153) designating March 27, 2025, as “National Women in Agriculture Day”.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 153) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m., Wednesday, April 2; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate resume consideration of Calendar No. 46, Dean Sauer; and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Sauer nomination at 2:15 p.m.; further, that following the cloture vote on the Sauer nomination, the Senate vote on cloture on Executive Calendar No. 47, Harmeet Dhillon; finally, that if cloture is invoked on the Sauer and Dhillon nominations, at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader, during Wednesday’s session of the Senate, the Senate vote

on confirmation of the nominations; finally, that if any nominations are confirmed during Wednesday's session, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 9:19 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 10 a.m.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JARED NOVELLY, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NEW ZEALAND, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA, THE COOK ISLANDS, AND NIUE.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

TERESA A. BONZANI
CHAD C. CARTER
BRANDON C. HEMPHILL
JAMES D. HONEYCUTT
JOANNA M. JACKSON
VALERIE V. T. JOHNSON
MICHAEL T. KITTELL
MARIE P. KRIG
SEAN P. MARTIN
PETER C. RHEE
STEPHEN C. RUSH
KEVIN R. SELLARS
ONIER VILLARREAL ALEJANDRO

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

LAUREL M. CHIARAMONTE
SHANNAN L. CORBIN
CANDACE C. GARCO
ANDREA A. HAYFLOCK
ANGELLA M. MUDD
STEPHEN L. TAYLOR
SHANNON M. VAUGHT
PATRICIA A. WILKINSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

ISREAL BENNETT, JR.
SCOTT A. BLACK
KAREN B. CHISHOLM
DANIEL L. DILLINGER
ATUL V. PHADKE
CHRISTOPHER L. SUHR

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

JAMESON C. DURHAM
ROBERT P. FLEMMING
MEGAN G. RIOS
JULIA K. WRIGLESWORTH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JAMES N. BOND
ELI H. DOWELL
QUENTIN M. GENKE
MICHAEL C. GORTON
JAMES M. HENRY
MITCHELL S. HOLLEY
BRADLEY H. KELSEY II

KEITH A. MANRY
RICHARD C. POOLE
CARLOS A. RAMOS GRAULAU
MARIO S. ROSARIO
ROBERT D. ROSE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

BRUCE A. ABBOTT
PRISCILLA ASHLEY ANDALIA
HEATHER MARIE BAUGHMAN
COLE M. BRENNAN
SHAE DANIEL BRYANT
JESSICA MARIE C. CHENG
SOREN A. CHRISTENSEN
KOLIN D. COOKSON
MICHAEL W. CRUCIGER
EMILY K. DOE

NOHORA CATALINA DUQUE
ANGELA LYNN EMMERSON
WESTON V. FRANDSEN
JACOB A. FREEZE
JAYMES ROBERT FURNIVAL
MIGUEL GUZMAN, JR.
HALI R. HALL
DANIEL JOSEPH HALSE, JR.
KARL M. HELLWIG
DRAKE ALEXANDER HENRIE
AUDREY NICOLE IMPERIAL
KASEY M. JONES
COURTNEY O. KELLY
SHEILA CATHERINE KREWET
RYAN W. MATZEN
JEREMY A. MELDRUM
HYRUM K. MITCHELL
SHAWN EDWARD MOFFETT
NICHOLAS T. NELSON
BRIAN C. NG
AI MI O. NGUYEN
DANIEL D. NGUYEN
MATTHEW P. ONEIL
ALEXANDER V. PADALINO
NICHOLAS SCOTT PANTORI
SE HA PARK
BRIANA NICOLE POLK
ASHLEY RAYE ROTH
EMILY M. SEXTON
BROCK KEVIN SHAW
PHILLIP JOHN SHERIDAN
JORDAN ELIZABETH SMITH
MAI N. STERN
JACOB ANDREW SULLIVAN
JOSEPH X. M. TANAKA
TROY NATHAN THAYER
DANIEL JOSEPH THORNER
AUSTIN MICHAEL TYLER
CHAD LOWELL WAGNER
KEVIN WANG
VICTORIA TSU CHING WEI
SHIRLEY X. YE
BENJAMIN K. YOON
FIRAS MOUWAFK ZAKO
CHRISTINE LAUREN ZMUDA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

DANIELLE D. ACACIO
JOSEPH R. ADAMSON
KOLE P. AKULA
YEABBSA KEFYALEW ALELIGNE
KATHERINE E. ALLEN
KEVIN C. ANDERSON
NOLAN N. ANDRES
CHRISTOPHER M. ANTHONY
CORIN R. ARCHULETA
CODY R. ASHCROFT
RAEGAN L. AUSTIN
DALEY FA VO AUUIL
BENJAMIN D. BAILES
THOMAS COLE BAKER
MATTHEW J. BALLEW
ASHLEY B. BARASA
JOHN A. BARCEL
JANEANE ANN BARROW
JACQUELINE A. BAUDE
BRIAN JAMES BAXTER
DEVIN E. BELL
WILLIAM C. BENNETT IV
DAVID AUSTIN BENNION, JR.
DAVID I. BERMEJO
CATHERINE JOHANNA BERNAL
ALEXANDER W. BETZ
JOHN M. BLACK
PAUL A. BLAKE IV
FACOB C. BLOTTER
PHILIP T. BOWERS
ZACHARY DAVID BOWERS
RICHARD PAUL BOYD
DOMINIC A. BRACERO
DEREK B. BRADY
JON ELLIOTT D. BRUBAKER
ANTHONY J. BRUSNAHAN
ANDREW T. BUSHONG
MADISON R. CALDER
JOHNNY R. CAMPBELL, JR.
MILES A. CAMPBELL
GREGORY DANIEL CARBONELLA
RYAN PETER CARPI
TANNER C. CARLOCK
RACHEL H. CARLSON
HANNA CHANG

LISA J. CHOE
NICHOLAS C. CHOI
BRYCE R. CHRISTENSEN
DANIEL W. CLINE
MICHAEL T. COLFAX
KATELYNN MARIE COLLINS
LUKE M. CONKLIN
WESLEY E. CONN
STACY L. COOK
PETER S. COOPER
BRANDON M. COPE
JASON MERRILL CORLESS
JILL E. COSTER
JOREY A. CUNICO
DANICA M. CUTSHALL
MARIO J. CUZZI III
HENRY G. DANCHI
CODY KENNETH DARRINGTON
WILLIAM J. DAVIS
JOHN HENRY L. DEAN
MIKALYN T. DEFOOR
IAN M. DEL VALLE
JESSICA S. DEMES
MARK T. DERASMO
YONATAN P. DOLLIN
DAVID M. DRAGO
ANIRUDH DWARAKANATH
LISA VELING DYKES
NICHOLAS Y. EISENBERG
FEDOUA ER RBII
LUIS ENRIQUE ESPINOZA
SOREN K. ESTVOLD
GEORGE L. ETTLE III
LAUREN PALITZ FERGUSON
FERNANDO H. FERRERA
EDMUND R. FLORENDO
STONE A. FRANKFORD
TRAVIS C. FRANTZ
MICHAEL P. FREIN
CASEY E. FRENCH
MARY B. GADAROWSKI
VALENCIA DENISE GARCIA
SAMUEL L. GARRETT
JOSEPH A. GATVO
MATTHEW W. GEORGE
SYDNEY J. GIBLIN
STEVEN J. GIBSON
ROY THOMAS GILDERSLEEVE II
KENDRICK V. GO
HENRY JOHN GOETZMAN
CAITLIN NICOLE GONSO LIN
VARUN GOPINATH
JONATHAN M. GOROG
DOUGLAS A. GOUCHE
LAWRENCE C. GRAY II
ASHLEY MARIE Y. GREEN LOTT
ABIGAIL S. GREENWELL
KRISTIN NICOLE GREER
TANNER G. GREIVING
MARCO A. GRIECO
CHRISTINA M. GRIMSLEY
ASHLEY C. GULLIXSON
MARC R. GUTIERREZ
RYAN R. HAAS
JACOB M. HALL
KATHERINE A. HANEL
ELIZABETH C. HARGROVE
CLINTON D. HARPER
KELLY ELIZABETH HARRELL
KYLE D. HART
SPENCER E. HART
DESON GALEN HAYNIE
BENJAMIN J. HAZEN
ZACHARY A. HEMANN
JONATHAN A. HESS
ROBERT D. HILL
VICTOR D. HOANG
FIONA C. HODGES
JENNIFER LYNN HOEBLER
MARCUS A. HOOF
MARIA M. HORNBERGER
ISAAC S. HOROWITZ
MITCHELL R. HORTEN
STEPHANIE ANNE HOWES
MICHAEL S. D. HUBBELL
DANIEL M. HUSHA
JOEL D. HUTCHISON
ELISABETH H. HWANG
RYAN T. HYATT
BENJAMIN P. ILIFF
JOSEPH W. INHOFFER
BRANNON L. INMAN
ADAM J. JACKSON
JACQUELINE N. JENSEN
COURTNEY A. JIMENEZ JARAMILLO
NOAH Y. JO
ANNA E. JOHNSON
KENNETH JAMES JOHNSON
JONATHAN E. JOSEPHSON
JENNY H. JUNG
KRISTINA LAKE KARLSON
MICHAEL J. KASUNIC
PETER F. KEARES
CONNOR L. KENNEY
CHRISTIAN L. KILPATRICK
HAESEUNG KIM
MIKE S. KIM
SHAWN K. KIM
RYAN W. KISSINGER
TAYLOR R. KJAR
JEANETTE K. KLAMPFOTH
MICHAEL A. KLEMM
LUKE DANIEL KREMBES
BUNNARACK KUCH
DAVID T. KVAMME
KAISER G. LAHM
ALEXANDER Q. LAM

BENJAMIN L. LANCASTER
 OLIVIA DANIELLE LARKIN
 CATHERINE EDELMIRA LAROWE
 KEENAN L. LARSEN
 KYRRA K. LAU EGLINTON
 CYNTHIA M. LEAF
 DANIEL G. LEE
 MATTHEW C. LITTLE
 JACOB PATRICK LOWERY
 SARAH MARIE MAGINNIS
 BENJAMIN C. MALLICOAT
 JAMES M. MALONEY
 MICHELLE ARIEL MANGOLD
 BRITNEY MARILYN MARGULIES
 ANDREW K. MASON
 JESSICA M. MAY FRANKLIN
 MITCHELL A. MC CLELLAN
 SHARDALE L. MCAFEE
 SARA J. MCCALL
 MARIANNE A. MCCARTNEY
 CHARLES JEREMY MEARS
 DAL'TREY ALLEN MEITZ
 JOSEPH THOMAS MERFELD
 CAITLIN M. MEYER
 LUKE M. MEYER
 BRITTANY A. MEYERS
 RANDY COHEN MICHAEL
 CODY A. MINOR
 WILLIAM F. MONAT
 EMILY MONTGOMERY
 ERIC K. MONTGOMERY
 KAYLA CRISTINA MOWATT
 ROBERT C. NALLENWEG
 YENLY T. NGUYEN
 RYAN DAVID NICKLAS
 NICHOLE MARGARET NILSEN
 DAVID ALLEN NOAKES, JR.
 SOUKAINA NOOR
 TAYLOR MC CLAIN NUNN
 JENNIFER N. NWKOCHA
 MARTIN F. OBERG
 LAUREL C. OFFICER
 ALEXANDER P. OGDEN
 TYLER A. OGDEN
 BRADY TODD OLSEN
 KYLE D. OLSEN
 TAYLOR M. ONEIL
 ERIN K. OPRY
 MATTHEW D. ORAM
 TYLER W. OWENS
 CHERILYN M. PALOCHAK
 JASON DICKEY PATTERSON
 JERRY A. PEER
 JUSTIN Z. PEOPLES
 LIZBETH L. PEREZ RODRIGUEZ
 KEVIN O. PEREZ
 SAMUEL E. PERRY
 CHRISTINE K. PERSAUD
 JENNIFER L. PERUGINI
 DORIE ELAINE PITZER
 JAMES K. POLING
 ROLAND W. POMFRET
 ALISHA N. PROVOST
 STEVEN J. PRUEITT
 MONICA M. PURMALEK
 MARYGAYLE MARTIN RADLEY
 MICHAEL R. RAMIREZ
 MATTHEW S. RASCH
 SHREENA G. REDDY
 JAMESON D. REICH
 CHRISTOPHER J. RILEY
 JUSTIN M. ROBBINS
 LANDON C. ROSEYEAR
 SAMANTHA N. ROWDEN
 TIFFANY L. RUSSELL
 LAUREN ANGELA RYS
 JOHNNY ALEX SANABRIA LOPEZ
 CHRISTEN M. SCAGGS
 STEPHANIE M. SCARAMELLA
 MATTHIAS P. SCHEELE
 AUDIE B. SCHMID
 SETH S. SCHUENEMEYER
 SPENCER N. SCHULTE
 HOLLY A. SENSABAUGH
 KRISTIA M. SHAW
 JONATHAN DAVID SHECTER
 DANIEL W. SHIELDS, JR.
 AVERYL M. SHINDRUK
 DESEREA M. SHORMAKER
 JORDAN E. SILVERMAN
 MATTHEW L. SILVERMAN
 GRACE E. SMITH
 LILLIAN PAIGE SMITH
 PARKER L. SPRIGGS
 HAYDEN A. SPRINGER
 BRIAN PATRICK STAAK
 PETER J. STACY
 JESSICA M. STANFIELD
 ROSS CHRISTIAN STANTON
 JUSTIN B. STAPLES
 LUCAS V. SUDER
 COLIN P. SULPIZIO
 RYAN B. W. SUMPTER
 AARON J. SURBAUGH
 LAUREN M. SWEET
 MATTHEW AKIRA TAIRA
 MICHAEL M. TANG
 BENJAMIN L. TEN EYCK
 JOSEPH M. TERESI
 GEOFFREY C. THOMAS
 KATHRYN FRANCES TINDLE
 LINDY L. TINKER
 ROBYN M. T. TOBILLO
 DAKOTA KATHERINE TOMASINI
 KYLE RANDALL TOMASINI
 TORA J. TORNBOM
 DREW F. TOWLES

JENNA L. TRIBULL
 ANTHONY T. TRINH
 CHELSEA H. TYSON
 FRANCESCA G. URSUA
 SPENCER G. VAN DECAR
 REMBRANDT R. VANDRUFF
 BREANNE N. VERGONET
 JARED L. VINSON
 WESLEY C. WAGERS
 CONNOR WAYNE WAGNER
 ROY M. WAGNER
 TIRZAH WENDE P. WAIT
 JOHN BEAUDOIN WALDRON
 MAX A. WALDRUP
 PATRICK C. WALSH
 RUIFEI WANG
 DANIEL L. WARD
 TYLER A. WARD
 BRADLEY R. WATKINS
 JAMES M. WATSON
 JERI L. WATSON
 DANIEL A. WEIDNER
 DANIELLE M. WILKIN
 JORDAN T. WILLIAMS
 ELIZABETH ANN WILLIS
 KIP JOHN WINDEN
 PATRICK M. WISE
 SIONE T. WOLFGRAMM
 JAMI M. WOOLNOUGH
 LUSINE M. ZAKHARIAN
 PATRICIA L. ZICK
 SIDNEY E. ZVEN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant colonel

CAROLINE G. FERRIS

To be major

SUZANNE PRISTAU

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

DOMINIC S. ANGIOLLO
 WENDY BUCKINGHAM
 MICHAEL P. DILLINGER
 ANTHONY J. GHIOITTO
 KATHRYN N. MILLER
 GARY M. OSBORN
 JENNIFER J. RAAB
 THOMAS M. SCHMIDT
 JOHN P. TOMAN
 HANNA YANG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

JEFFREY A. BALLOU
 STACEY L. HANSON
 TODD B. HARDER
 RANDOLPH E. MCCAFFERTY
 STEPHEN A. MEADOWS
 JEFFREY D. SCHLENZ
 TIMOTHY C. STEELE
 BRANDON E. STEPHENS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

STEVEN D. ALANIZ
 JEFFREY R. BURROUGHS
 TYLER M. CHRISTENSEN
 MATTHEW D. HEINEMAN
 BRENT D. MARTIN
 STANLEY MICHEL
 PATRICK M. RALPH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

VINCENT T. CHIAPPONE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

DAVID A. FISHMAN
 JASON M. SELLECK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

ROSS E. AGE
 ANTHONY J. ALECCI
 JENNIFER J. ALECCI
 JOY L. ATKINS
 KATRINE B. BENNETT
 LISA L. BREAL
 JAMES P. CHEVALIER
 FRANCES J. DIXON
 TERRILL W. EIKNER
 CEDRIC L. FINNEN
 JEFFREY E. GABOR
 RANDOLPH E. GANTT
 JEFFREY M. GARRETTE

KAREN M. GHARST
 JESSICA J. GREENING
 MILDRED L. GREY THERIOT
 PATRICIA B. HARTMAN
 JASON L. JOHNSON
 MELISSA K. JONES
 JOHNATHAN A. JORDAN
 WHITNEY M. LEE
 STUART L. MARTIN
 ROBERT P. MEHAN, JR.
 SHANE L. PATTY
 ALFRED S. PENNINGTON
 KRISTI L. PORTER
 JADEE A. PURDY
 JAVIER M. RODRIGUEZ
 NICOLAS P. ROUECHE
 MICHAEL P. SPAULDING
 CHARLES A. TROVARELLO
 RENATA R. TURNER
 CARMEL R. WEED, JR.
 AMY M. WHITE
 MARCELLA R. WHITFIELD
 JOSEPH C. WILSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

MELINDA C. ALBISTON
 DANIEL L. BRUMFIELD
 TROY L. CAHOON
 CHRISTOPHER L. CARLTON
 SARAH K. CHELGREN BROOKS
 CHALENE A. EBER
 GARRETT S. FISHER
 KRISTIN D. HORT
 CHARLES P. KUBIK
 DANIEL LIM
 JOSHUA F. MARK
 JEFFREY R. OLTMANN'S
 AARON T. STEVENSON
 JAMIE M. SZMODIS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

SCOTT W. BOHN
 JOSEPH L. BURKHEAD
 DMITRI KALININ
 EUGENE C. RICHTER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

RONALD S. ADAMS
 IMELDA U. ANTONIO
 DARIA C. AWUSAH
 DOUGLAS S. BATES
 TIMOTHY K. BENNETT
 WHITNEY L. BOND
 RYAN D. BRUNSON
 MICHAEL T. BUNNELL
 DANA A. CATES
 CLAYTON J. COX
 MICHAEL K. CRENSHAW
 DAVID T. DAYTON, JR.
 VINCENT L. DEFABO
 JEREMY P. DELACERDA
 MELISSA R. FOWLER
 SEPTEMBER R. FOY
 JOSEPH M. GROFF
 JONATHAN B. HOOVER
 OSASUMWEN N. IZEVBIGIE
 CATHERINE M. KALLEN
 JACQUELINE MCDERMOTT WINTCH
 DANELLE M. MCGINNIS
 DAVID B. MELEAR
 BRANDON M. OMALLEY
 MARIE PATTERSON
 NICHOLAS A. REYES
 NATHAN D. ROYER
 CANDICE D. SCHUBBE
 MARK J. SCHWARTZ
 CHRISTINE E. SEIBERT
 ALAN G. SERRANO
 AMY E. SFARA
 HEATHER A. SMILDE
 AMANDA S. STREETMAN
 LANDON J. WEDERMYER
 DONALD R. WEEKS III
 TYLER C. WEEKS
 TRENTON M. WHITE
 JOSEPH D. WISE
 MATTHEW G. ZELLNER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be major

JOHN K. LEE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be major

ADAM J. POLOZOLA
 NAVDEEP SINGH

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

JENARA L. ALLEN
STEVEN M. BENNETT, JR.
BENJAMIN J. BRITTEN
CHERIELYNNE A. GABRIEL
MARK D. HOIKKA
DOUGLAS C. HOLMES
ROBERT B. KIM
AARON T. KRANCE
MICHAEL S. LUNA
MATTHEW T. MOBERG
PAULENCIA L. MORRIS
PETER M. PEDALINO
DEANDRA M. PRICE NEWBY
CHRISTOPHER J. RAIMONDI
NICOLE A. SMITH
MATTHEW S. STRATMEYER
MATTHEW T. WILSON
BRENT J. WINWARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

HATTIE DAWN ALEXANDER
JOHN B. ALLIS
MATTHEW BARNES
ALICE E. BARSOUMIAN
SARAH N. BOWE
ERIN N. BRACK
MATTHEW S. BROCK
KELVIN N. BUSH
DIANE G. CARANTA
CHARLIE A. COLLENBORNE
NOEL R. COLLS
JAMES W. COX
NICOLE C. CROLEY
KRISTEN L. DEWILDE
JORDAN P. DOWNING
DAVID A. DY
SHAUN FELCHER
AVEN W. FORD
KATHRYN T. GATTONE
GAYLE D. HAISCHER ROLLO
ANDREW B. HALL
WASSEM Y. JUAKIEM
ALBERT K. KOERNER
KEVIN J. KRAULAND
LINDSEY E. KUSCHNERAIT
MICHAEL HOWARD MADSEN
CHRISTOPHER RAY MAHONEY
MIGUEL JOSE MORALES
DANIEL M. MOSELEY
C. J. PICKARDGABRIEL
DANNY R. PIZZINO, JR.
MARION R. POWELL
RAMON A. RIOJAS
KATHLEEN M. SARBER
JOSHUA N. SCOTT
PATRICK L. SHORT
MONICA M. SICKLER
JEREMY D. SIMMONS
TIFFANY R. SIMPSON
JOSEPH C. SKY
JOHN R. SMITH
SCOTT A. STAFFORD
TRAVIS A. STEPHENSEN
JONATHAN A. STERING
MATTHEW J. STREITZ
MARY F. STUEVER
ANDREW S. THAGARD
JAMES J. TSCHUDY III
MARY ROSE B. VALINA
ERNEST B. WEBB
BRYANT J. WEBBER
DERRICK ALLAN WHITESIDE
SKY J. WOLF
MICHAEL P. ZEOLA
JOE X. ZHANG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

To be colonel

CODY W. CLARK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

MICHAEL BARTELS
HEATHER L. BEATTY
JARED T. BRODRICK
KIRBY P. BROWN, JR.
MELISSA C. BURTON
SEAN M. CAMP
BROOKE J. CARR
CYRUS R. CHAMPAGNE
KIMBERLY Y. CHAMPAGNE
JULIA M. COPPOLA
KEVIN A. DEIBLER
ERN M. DORRANCE
OSCAR A. GARCIA
JESSICA L. GRAVES
STEPHANIE M. HAHN
NICHOLAS E. HERALD
RICKY A. D. HORNSBY
SHANE O. HUFF
PHILLIP A. INIGO
MICHAEL L. JUNI
KARUNESH K. KHANNA
MARCUS P. LAIRD
JEREMY J. LEADER

ALAN E. MARKS
PATRICIA G. MARSHALL
JASON R. MAY
PATRICK M. MCDONALD
ANDREW R. NOWICKI
MELANIE A. OLIVER
ROWENA Y. ORMISTON
KEVIN P. PEEL
KATRICE D. POWELL THOMPSON
RICHARD S. QUINTON
KATHRYN M. ROBERSON
SCOTT A. SABO
LIBBIE M. SHAH
MICHAEL R. SHEETS
TIMOTHY M. SPINK
NICHOLAS L. STROCCHIA
ZACHARY N. ZISCHANG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

STEVEN A. BROWN
ANDREW M. BUCK
JUSTIN J. ESHER
PATTY A. FERNADEZ
JOSHUA D. JOHNSON
JON W. KREPSKY
JOHAN Y. LEE
ERIN J. PERRIN
JESSICA H. SCHAFER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

ANGELA C. LIPOVSKY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

DANIEL J. ARNESON
JONATHAN S. BARBER
RAYMOND C. BEVIVINO III
JAMES C. BURKE
RYAN F. COVAHEY
EDWARD DAVIES IV
RYAN M. DEKOK
ANDREW J. DOERR
RUSSELL B. FETTE
JARED S. FOLEY
PETER K. FUKUSHIMA
MICHAEL W. GARD
STEPHEN M. GILKESON
HARSHMIR K. GILL
ANDREW F. GILLIS
MARY E. GOLDSMITH
COURTNEY B. HANCOCK
CHRISTOPHER S. HARRIS
ANDREW L. HAZELTON
RICHARD M. HEBB
JOHN D. HENDRICKSON
CHRISTINA L. HOPPER
CHRISTOPHER P. KOJAK
SCOTT M. KONZEM
CRISTOBAL LAMBOY
LYDELL Z. LOPEZ
NIUL S. MANSKE
ANDREW J. MARSHALL
CHRISTOPHER B. MCCALL
JEFFREY J. MCLEAN
MARY F. MINSHEW
DAVID MITCHELL
RYAN A. MOWERS
THOMAS E. PARKER
JEREMY A. PATRICK
JOHN F. PENDERIS IV
CHRISTOPHER J. PFEILL, JR.
STEPHEN N. PITUCH
RANDALL J. RUPP
MATTHEW S. SAMEC
WILBERTO M. SANCHEZ
JOHN M. SARVIS
FRANCIS W. SAUL III
DEREK J. SHEHEE
KRISTIE L. SZMAJDA
CHARLES D. TURPIN
MARK A. WARNER
JALEN A. WHITENER
CHIP R. YDE

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major

MATTHEW J. RYAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

To be colonel

BRENTON D. GROENEVELD
DAVID B. KANG
NGUANYADE S. KEMOKAI
JON E. NOVAK
SHAWN L. TABANKIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

To be colonel

ROBERT R. ANDERSEN III
CARTER L. FRANSEN
SCOTT A. LANGLANDS
RYAN L. ROSSMAN
DAVID S. SURRATT
JANEL R. WIESE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

To be colonel

JOSEPH M. BYRD
JAMES R. DAVIS
JUSTIN T. FLOYD
DANIEL M. GOLDSMITH
DAVID G. GOODALL
JOSEPH P. LISANTI
STEPHEN D. LOVE
JUAN RODRIGUEZ
MATTHEW S. SCHOETTNER
ROBERT A. VIRANT
SCOTT A. WELLS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

ANDREW S. BRENNAN
NICHOLAS A. CHOU
DAVID L. HATHEWAY
KEVIN T. PEEK
ROBERT A. PETERSON
ANDY B. SHEPHERD
RONALD K. THOMPSON
SCOTT E. THOMPSON

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

VIRGINIA A. EMERY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 12203:

To be colonel

RAYMOND L. AYERS
ROBERT J. BAIMA
DIANE C. HOPKINSON RICCI
TIMOTHY J. SASTIC
STEVEN W. TIMM

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

STEPHANIE M. WADDELL

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 7064:

To be major

MATTHEW I. FINE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY NURSE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 7064:

To be colonel

CAMISHA Q. ABATTAM
KENNETH M. AYLES
SAMANTHA E. BAZAN
WILLIAM BOSOMPEM
KENORA L. DIXON
MEGAN D. DONALD
JULIE R. DUFFY
JENNIFER L. FELTWELL
BETHANY D. GARDNER
KRISTINE M. GARRISON
JENNIFER Y. GIVENS
KELLY N. GREEN
TERRY B. HOOK
FESTINA R. HUMEDAWSON
ERIN M. JACKSON
KYLEE J. JEWETT
LAQUINCIA R. KEY
STACEY D. LENT
TANESHA D. LINDSAY
CANISHA A. MARTIN
ATIA C. MBAH
TODD A. MORRIS
DERRAL W. PROWANT
ADAM J. SOKOLOWSKI
KIMBERLY M. SOLARI
GENNA S. SPEED
RACHEL G. TYLER
KELLEY A. WATTS
JEAN L. WILLIAMS
RACHEAL L. WOOD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALIST CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 7064:

To be colonel

DAVID M. BOLAND
ROBIN E. CUSHING

JOSE D. DURBIN
MELISSA D. FOLSOM
CHRIS M. GONZALEZ
BRIAN T. GREGG
JOETTA M. KHAN
JUSTIN D. KOCHER
JONATHAN D. LESHNER
CHRISTOPHER W. REMILLARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 7064:

To be colonel

HARRIS A. ABBASI
NYKEBA L. ANTHONY
AUDREY A. BOENKER
WILLIAM S. BOSLEY
MARISOL S. CASTANETO
JESS M. CHRISTENSEN
THOMAS C. COLLETTE
NATALIE D. COLLINS
MARIE P. CORPUZ
NIKKI L. DAVIS
PHILIP J. DURANDO
CHRISTOPHER W. ELLISON
CORY L. GEROULD
ANGELA M. GILLIE
CHASKA L. GOMEZ
CARRIE L. GRAVES
MICHELL L. GRIFFITH
CHRISTOPHER J. GUENTHNER
LAUREN M. HAMLIN
CHAD R. HANDLEY
JEREMY R. HERSHFELD
PAUL HESTER
GARRETT W. HOLT
ADRIAN R. JOHNSON
BRIAN R. JOHNSON
STEVEN G. JONES
BEATRICE I. KEARNEY
JASON S. KIM
KATHERINE M. KINDER
BRADLEY K. KISTLER
SHERRY M. KWON
LEWIS S. LONG
JAMES B. MACDONALD
KATIE M. MARTINEZ
BRIAN A. MASON
MICHELLE L. MILLER
EDUARDO T. MOTEN
KRISTIAN D. MROZCKO
MICHAEL J. MURPHY
ROBERT V. PARISH
ALEXANDER RAGAN
PATRICIA J. RAZURI
JOHN F. ROBICHAUX
JORGE F. RODRIGUEZ
RICARDO J. RODRIGUEZCRUZ
DENNIS M. RUFOLO
MARK G. SANDER
SHAMECCA M. SCOTT
REBECCA L. SINCLAIR
JEREMY J. TRESMOTT
HILDEHARDO F. VIADO, JR.
0003080783

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

FREDDIE F. MARTINEZ

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be colonel

JEREMY C. HAWKINS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JUSTIN R. MCCANN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be lieutenant colonel

JOEL C. NIENABER

IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADES INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 605:

To be captain

GEORAG M. ANDREWS
JEFFREY R. BERNHARDT
PATRICK E. BLIND
KYLE F. CALTON
JOSEPH A. CAMPBELL
BRAD A. FANCHER
MICHAEL J. FELDHUES
BRADFORD S. FOSTER
JEREMY D. GARCIA
ROWDY A. GARCIA
DOUGLAS G. HAGENBUCH
ROBERT B. INMAN
LUKE E. KELVINGTON
JAMES H. KEPPER IV
HECTOR MARIN
KYLE S. MCVAY
ANDREW J. METZCUS
BRAD W. MUSKOPF
RICHARD J. PRESCOTT
ALEXANDER E. RATCLIFFE
BRIAN A. ROSS
JONATHAN P. SCOBO
VANCE D. SCOTT
JOHANNES SMITH
AARON M. STUTZMAN
CHAD T. TELLA
SHAWN M. VRABEL
GEORGE B. WATKINS

To be commander

NATHAN A. BATTLE
WILLIAM L. BRIGHT
JOHN P. ENGLISH
DAVID A. ERWERT
BRIAN J. GARCIA
JAMES B. HAGG
DANIEL J. HARDMAN
BRENT W. HARKINS
PAUL G. HUCKABY
TIMOTHY A. KAIN
CALEB D. MCKINNON
MATTHEW R. MILLER
JEREMIAH J. NELSON
PAUL M. NOVESS
JAMES M. ORR
JOHN H. PANDE

BENJAMIN W. PARKER
ARTHUR J. SCIORTINO
TIMOTHY A. SHAW
LUCAS K. STONE
NICHOLAS M. TAYLOR
KHALID TRADY
ALEXANDER G. TREFFILEK
IAN C. URBAS
SHAWN S. VILLAR
EARL WATSON III
JACOB R. WOFFORD

To be lieutenant commander

DONALD S. ALEXANDER
SETH N. AMMONS
KEITH R. BARRETT
ALAN D. BURGREN
CARY A. ELWARD
ALEJANDRO J. FERNANDEZ
RYAN C. GALENTINE
WILLIAM I. HART
AVERY M. HILL
MICHAEL J. HOLLAND
ANDREW M. JULIUS
STEFAN J. KOBERL
JARROD R. KUJAWSKI
CHRISTIAN J. LASSWELL
WILLIAM S. LUGO
RYAN P. LUKACOVIC
CHRISTIAN A. MARTIN
JEFFREY A. MARTIN
DENNIS J. MAULDWIN
BERL D. MCLAURIN
JOSEPH C. MERKI
ZACHARY D. PENNINGTON
RYAN A. SATANEK
JOEL W. SCHAEFER
ALEXANDER P. SEVERSON
TIMOTHY D. SHIELDS
BEN W. SILVERFOOTH
JAME SOURIVAVONGSA
ANDREW C. STEINMETZ
LUKAS J. TEMPLE
JONATHAN D. WABEKE
DANIEL S. YASSUDA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

JAMES W. GORMAN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 716:

To be lieutenant commander

IAN G. AUCCIN

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be commander

CHRISTOPHER H. ELLIOTT

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be captain

KARLIE M. BLAKE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

To be lieutenant commander

JEFFREY J. KIM

IN THE COAST GUARD

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 14, U.S.C., SECTION 2121, INCLUDING THOSE RESERVE OFFICERS WHO ARE TO BE APPOINTED AS PERMANENT COMMISSIONED OFFICERS PURSUANT TO 14, U.S.C., SECTION 2101(A)(2):

To be lieutenant commander

JOHN O. MANSOLLILLO

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate April 1, 2025:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

MATTHEW WHITAKER, OF IOWA, TO BE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY.

WITHDRAWAL

Executive Message transmitted by the President to the Senate on April 1, 2025 withdrawing from further Senate consideration the following nomination:

JARED NOVELLY, OF MISSOURI, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NEW ZEALAND, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA, WHICH WAS SENT TO THE SENATE ON MARCH 24, 2025.

Daily Digest

(Legislative Day of Monday, March 31, 2025)

Senate

Chamber Action

(Senate continued in session from Monday, March 31, 2025)

Routine Proceedings, pages S1961–S2104

Measures Introduced: Twenty-eight bills and five resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 1218–1245, and S. Res. 149–153. **Pages S2092–93**

Measures Reported:

S. 1047, to prohibit individuals convicted of defrauding the Government from receiving any assistance from the Small Business Administration.

S. 1093, to amend the Small Business Act to enhance the Office of Rural Affairs.

Measures Passed:

National Women in Agriculture Day: Senate agreed to S. Res. 153, designating March 27, 2025, as “National Women in Agriculture Day”. **Page S2099**

Oz Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Mehmet Oz, of Pennsylvania, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. **Page S2086**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Thursday, April 3, 2025. **Page S2086**

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session. **Page S2086**

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination. **Page S2086**

Sauer and Dhillon Nominations—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at approximately 10 a.m., on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, Senate resume consideration of the nomination of Dean Sauer, of Missouri, to be Solicitor General of the United States; that notwithstanding Rule XXII, Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture

on the nomination at 2:15 p.m.; that following the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Dean Sauer, Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Harmeet Dhillon, of California, to be an Assistant Attorney General; and that if cloture is invoked on the nominations of Dean Sauer and Harmeet Dhillon, at a time to be determined by the Majority Leader, in consultation with the Democratic Leader, during Wednesday’s session of the Senate, Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations. **Pages S2099–S2100**

Nomination Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nomination:

By 52 yeas to 45 nays (Vote No. EX. 157), Matthew Whitaker, of Iowa, to be United States Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador. **Pages S2084–85, S2103**

Nominations Received: Senate received the following nominations:

Jared Novelly, of Missouri, to be Ambassador to New Zealand, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Independent State of Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Niue.

Routine lists in the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy. **Pages S2100–03**

Nomination Withdrawn: Senate received notification of withdrawal of the following nomination:

Jared Novelly, of Missouri, to be Ambassador to New Zealand, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Independent State of Samoa, which was sent to the Senate on March 24, 2025. **Pages S2103–04**

Messages from the House: **Page S2091**

Measures Referred: **Page S2091**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Pages S2091–92**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S2093–94**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S2094–99**

Additional Statements: Pages S2090–91

Authorities for Committees to Meet: Page S2099

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—157) Page S2085

Adjournment: Senate convened at 3 p.m., on Monday, March 31, 2025, and adjourned at 9:19 p.m., on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, until 10 a.m., on Wednesday, April 2, 2025. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S2100.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: Committee concluded a hearing to examine S. 222, to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to allow schools that participate in the school lunch program to serve whole milk, after receiving testimony from Eve Stoodly, Director, Nutrition Guidance and Analysis Division, Department of Agriculture; Linette Dodson, Georgia Department of Education, Carrollton; Keith T. Ayoob, Albert Einstein College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, New York, New York; Krista Byler, Union City Area School District, Spartansburg, Pennsylvania; and Dan Gorman, Montague Area Public Schools, Montague, Michigan.

NOMINATION

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nomination of Lieutenant General John D. Caine (Retired), to be general and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense, after the nominee testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Armed Services: Committee ordered favorably the nomination of Elbridge Colby, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Department of Defense, and 33 nominations in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Tilman Fertitta, of Texas, to be Ambassador to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Republic of San Marino, who was introduced by Senators Cornyn and Kelly, Warren Stephens, of Arkansas, to be Ambassador to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who was introduced by Senators Boozman and Cotton, and Thomas Barrack, of Colorado, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, who was introduced by Senator Hagerty, all of the Department of State, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

BIG TECH FIXES

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy, and Consumer Rights concluded a hearing to examine big fixes for big tech, after receiving testimony from Kamyk Bazbaz, DuckDuckGo, and Jason Kint, Digital Content Next, both of New York, New York; Morgan Harper, American Economic Liberties Project, Columbus, Ohio; Garry Tan, Y Combinator, San Francisco, California; and Rory Van Loo, Boston University School of Law, Boston, Massachusetts.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Samuel Brown, of Nevada, to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs, who was introduced by Senator Sullivan, James Baehr, of Louisiana, to be General Counsel, who was introduced by Senator Cassidy, and Richard Topping, of Ohio, to be Chief Financial Officer, who was introduced by Senator Tillis, all of the Department of Veterans Affairs, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

INTELLIGENCE

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee received a closed briefing on certain intelligence matters from officials of the intelligence community.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 48 public bills, H.R. 2480–2527; and 19 resolutions, H.J. Res. 83–86; H. Con. Res. 23–23; and H. Res. 269–281, were introduced. **Pages H1371–75**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H1376–77**

Reports Filed: There were no reports filed today.

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Taylor to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H1341**

Recess: The House recessed at 12:18 p.m. and reconvened at 2 p.m. **Page H1343**

Recess: The House recessed at 2:16 p.m. and reconvened at 4:20 p.m. **Page H1345**

Committee Resignation: Read a letter from Representative Houchin wherein she resigned from the Committee on Education and Workforce. **Page H1356**

Recess: The House recessed at 5:46 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m. **Page H1356**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Directing the Librarian of Congress to promote the more cost-effective, efficient, and expanded availability of the Annotated Constitution and pocket-part supplements by replacing the hardbound versions with digital versions: H.R. 1234, to direct the Librarian of Congress to promote the more cost-effective, efficient, and expanded availability of the Annotated Constitution and pocket-part supplements by replacing the hardbound versions with digital versions; **Pages H1345–47**

Filing Relief for Natural Disasters Act: H.R. 517, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the rules for postponing certain deadlines by reason of disaster, by a $\frac{2}{3}$ yea-and-nay vote of 388 yeas with none voting “nay”, Roll No. 84; **Pages H1347–48, H1356**

Internal Revenue Service Math and Taxpayer Help Act: H.R. 998, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require additional information on math and clerical error notices; **Pages H1348–49**

National Taxpayer Advocate Enhancement Act of 2025: H.R. 997, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to conform to the intent of the Internal Revenue Service Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, as set forth in the joint explanatory statement of the committee of conference ac-

companying Conference Report 105–599, that the National Taxpayer Advocate be able to hire and consult counsel as appropriate, by a $\frac{2}{3}$ yea-and-nay vote of 385 yeas with none voting “nay”, Roll No. 85; **Pages H1349–51 H1356–57**

Recovery of Stolen Checks Act: H.R. 1155, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow taxpayers to elect to receive certain replacement refunds electronically; and **Pages H1351–53**

Electronic Filing and Payment Fairness Act: H.R. 1152, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the application of the mailbox rule to documents and payments electronically submitted to the Internal Revenue Service. **Pages H1354–56**

Suspension—Proceedings Postponed: The House debated the following measure under suspension of the rules. Further proceedings were postponed.

Disaster Related Extension of Deadlines Act: H.R. 1152, amended, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the postponement of certain deadlines by reason of disasters applicable to the limitation on credit or refund, and to take postponements into account for purposes of sending collection notices. **Pages H1353–54**

Presidential Messages: Received a message from the President transmitting a notification stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13694 of April 1, 2015, regarding significant malicious cyber-related activities originating outside the United States, and with respect to which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13757 of December 28, 2016, Executive Order 13984 of January 19, 2021, Executive Order 14110 of October 30, 2023 (revoked by Executive Order 14148 of January 20, 2025), and Executive Order 14144 of January 16, 2025, is to continue in effect beyond April 1, 2025—referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 119–33).

Page H1344

Received a message from the President transmitting a notification stating that the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13664 of April 3, 2014, with respect to South Sudan is to continue in effect beyond April 3, 2025—referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 119–34).

Page H1345

Senate Referral: S.J. Res. 18 was held at the desk.

Page H1345

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate by the Clerk and subsequently presented to the House today appears on pages H1344–45.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H1356 and H1357.

Adjournment: The House met at 12 p.m. and adjourned at 9:33 p.m.

Committee Meetings

NO ROGUE RULINGS ACT OF 2025; SAFEGUARD AMERICAN VOTER ELIGIBILITY ACT; DISAPPROVING THE RULE RELATING TO OVERDRAFT LENDING; VERY LARGE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS; DISAPPROVING THE RULE RELATING TO DEFINING LARGER PARTICIPANTS OF A MARKET FOR GENERAL-USE DIGITAL CONSUMER PAYMENT APPLICATIONS

Committee on Rules: Full Committee began a hearing on H.R. 1526, the “No Rogue Rulings Act of 2025”; H.R. 22, the “Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act”; S.J. Res. 18, disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Overdraft Lending: Very Large Financial Institutions”; and S.J. Res. 28, disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Defining Larger Participants of a Market for General-Use Digital Consumer Payment Applications”. Testimony was heard from Chairman Steil, and Representatives Issa, Raskin, Morelle, Barr, Waters, and Johnson of Texas.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: to hold hearings to examine restoring Boeing’s status as a great American manufacturer, focusing on safety first, 10 a.m., SD–G50.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: to hold hearings to examine the nominations of Katharine MacGregor, of Florida, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior, and James Danly, of Tennessee, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy, 10 a.m., SD–366.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: to hold hearings to examine constructing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization bill, focusing on United States Secretary of Transportation’s perspective, 10 a.m., SD–406.

Committee on Foreign Relations: business meeting to consider the nominations of Ronald Johnson, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the United Mexican States, Mike Huckabee, of Arkansas, to be Ambassador to the State of Israel, Reed Rubinstein, of Maryland, to be Legal Adviser, and Kevin Cabrera, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Panama, all of the Department of State, 10 a.m., S–116, Capitol.

Committee on Indian Affairs: to hold an oversight hearing to examine Native American education, focusing on Federal programs at the U.S. Department of Education, 2:30 p.m., SD–628.

Committee on the Judiciary: to hold hearings to examine District Judges, focusing on exploring legislative solutions to the bipartisan problem of universal injunctions, 10:15 a.m., SD–226.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship: business meeting to consider the nominations of William Briggs, of Texas, to be Deputy Administrator, and Casey Mulligan, of Illinois, to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy, both of the Small Business Administration; to be immediately followed by a business meeting to consider S. 1199, to extend the statute of limitations for fraud under certain pandemic programs, 2:30 p.m., SR–428A.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to receive a closed briefing on certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, hearing entitled “Member Day”, 8:30 a.m., H–140 Capitol.

Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled “U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in North and South America”, 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Full Committee, hearing entitled “U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in North and South America”, 10 a.m., 2212 Rayburn. This hearing is closed.

Committee on Education and Workforce, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, hearing entitled “From Chalkboards to Chatbots: The Impact of AI on K–12 Education”, 10:15 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled “Examining the FDA’s Regulation of Over-the-Counter Monograph Drugs”, 10:15 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, hearing entitled “Aging Technology, Emerging Threats: Examining Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities in Legacy Medical Devices”, 10:30 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on National Security, Illicit Finance, and International Financial Institutions, hearing entitled “Following the Money: Tools and Techniques to Combat Fraud”, 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, South and Central Asia Subcommittee, hearing entitled “Censorship-Industrial Complex: The Need for First Amendment Safeguards at the State Department”, 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Full Committee, hearing entitled “A Return to Maximum Pressure: Comprehensively Countering the Iranian Regime’s Malign Activities”, 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection, hearing entitled “Cybersecurity is Local, Too: Assessing the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program”, 10 a.m., 310 Cannon.

Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement; and Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology, joint hearing entitled “Exploring the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Across the DHS Enterprise”, 2 p.m., 310 Cannon.

Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet; and Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government, joint hearing entitled “Judicial Overreach and Constitutional Limits on the Federal Courts”, 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs, hearing entitled “America’s AI Moonshot: The Economics of AI, Data Centers, and Power Consumption”, 10 a.m., 2247 Rayburn.

Task Force on the Declassification of Federal Secrets, hearing entitled “Task Force on the Declassification of Federal Secrets: the JFK Files”, 2 p.m., HVC–210.

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, continue hearing on H.R. 1526, the “No Rogue Rulings Act of 2025”; H.R. 22, the “Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act”; S.J. Res. 18, disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Overdraft Lending: Very Large Financial Institutions”; and S.J. Res. 28, disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Defining Larger Participants of a Market for General-Use Digital Consumer Payment Applications”, 8 a.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics, hearing entitled “Leveraging Commercial Innovation for Lunar Exploration: A Review of NASA’s CLPS Initiative”, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Small Business, Full Committee, hearing entitled “The Golden Age: Unleashing Main Street Through Deregulation”, 10 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Full Committee, hearing entitled “Harnessing Biomedical Innovation: Modernizing VA Healthcare for the Future”, 10:15 a.m., 360 Cannon.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

10 a.m., Wednesday, April 2

Senate Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Senate will resume consideration of the nomination of Dean Sauer, of Missouri, to be Solicitor General of the United States, and vote on the motion to invoke cloture thereon at 2:15 p.m. Following the vote on cloture on the nomination of Dean Sauer, Senate will vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Harmeet Dhillon, of California, to be an Assistant Attorney General. If cloture is invoked on either of the nominations, votes on confirmation of the nominations will occur at a time to be determined by the two Leaders during Wednesday's session.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Tuesday, April 1

House Chamber

Program for Tuesday: Consideration of S.J. Res. 18—Disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Overdraft Lending: Very Large Financial Institutions” (Subject to a Rule). Consideration of S.J. Res. 28—Disapproving the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to “Defining Larger Participants of a Market for General-Use Digital Consumer Payment Applications” (Subject to a Rule).

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