

and strong action must be taken to end this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Sheriff Ivey and the brave men and women of the Brevard County Sheriff's Office for this opportunity to see firsthand the challenges they face, and I will continue to stand with law enforcement as we fight to keep our communities safe.

□ 1215

#### HONORING KENNETH LEE PARKER

(Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Kenneth Lee Parker, the former mayor of Momeyer, North Carolina.

Kenneth was a dedicated public servant and a true pillar of the Momeyer community. For over 25 years, he selflessly served as mayor, dedicating his time as assistant fire chief and a volunteer EMT.

Kenneth's commitment to his community didn't stop there. For 52 years, he was actively involved in the Ruritan club where he and his wife, Colleen, provided delicious meals and he gracefully embodied its motto: "fellowship, goodwill, and community service."

We reflect on Kenneth's remarkable life and contributions, and I extend my prayers to his family and all those who were fortunate enough to have known him. His legacy of kindness and service will forever resonate in our hearts. May we all find inspiration in Kenneth's example and strive to make a difference as he did.

#### ELECTING A MEMBER TO A CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican Conference, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 107

*Resolved*, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE: Mr. Moylan (to rank immediately after Mr. Rulli).

Mr. GRIFFITH (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### ELECTING A MEMBER TO A CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 108

*Resolved*, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET: Ms. Chu to rank immediately after Ms. Jayapal.

Mr. AGUILAR (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE STRATEGIC COMPETITION BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment pursuant to section 4(a) of House Resolution 5, 119th Congress, and the order of the House of January 3, 2025, of the following Members to the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party:

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Illinois  
Ms. CASTOR, Florida  
Mr. CARSON, Indiana  
Mr. MOULTON, Massachusetts  
Mr. KHANNA, California  
Ms. SHERRILL, New Jersey  
Ms. STEVENS, Michigan  
Mr. TORRES, New York  
Ms. BROWN, Ohio  
Mr. STANTON, Arizona  
Ms. TOKUDA, Hawaii

#### CONTINUATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO SITUATION IN AND IN RELATION TO BURMA—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 119-17)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90

days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the situation in and in relation to Burma declared in Executive Order 14014 of February 10, 2021, is to continue in effect beyond February 10, 2025.

The situation in and in relation to Burma, and in particular the February 1, 2021, coup—in which the military overthrew the democratically elected civilian government of Burma and unjustly arrested and detained government leaders, politicians, human rights defenders, journalists, and religious leaders, thereby rejecting the will of the people of Burma and undermining the country's democratic transition and rule of law—continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 14014 with respect to the situation in and in relation to Burma.

DONALD J. TRUMP,  
THE WHITE HOUSE, February 4, 2025.

#### PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 27, HALT ALL LETHAL TRAFFICKING OF FENTANYL ACT

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 93 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 93

*Resolved*, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 27) to amend the Controlled Substances Act with respect to the scheduling of fentanyl-related substances, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. The amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, and on any further amendment thereto, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce or their respective designees; (2) the further amendment printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules, if offered by the Member designated in the report, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order, shall be considered as read, shall be separately debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question; and (3) one motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I further ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, last night the Rules Committee met and reported out a rule for one measure, H.R. 27, the HALT Fentanyl Act, under a structured rule.

The rule provides for 1 hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce or their respective designees and provides for one motion to recommit.

As most Members know, unfortunately, we all know somebody who has been affected by the drug overdose epidemic plaguing our country.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2023, there were more than 107,000 overdose deaths that occurred in the United States. These staggering numbers are due in large part to the increased presence of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues or fentanyl-related substances, which are approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin. The lethal dose of fentanyl is just 2 milligrams, or about 4 grains of sand.

A loophole the cartels use and have tried to use to traffic illicit fentanyl into our country is by changing just one component of fentanyl's chemical structure in order to create a fentanyl analogue or a fentanyl-related substance. The cartels did this in an attempt to evade our criminal laws.

Right now, fentanyl analogues are considered schedule I substances but only because of a series of temporary scheduling orders, which is now set to expire on March 31, 2025.

Along with my colleague, Mr. LATTA from Ohio, we decided to introduce H.R. 27, the HALT Fentanyl Act.

The bill aims to curb overdose deaths by permanently scheduling fentanyl analogues or fentanyl-related substances as schedule I substances. This will strengthen law enforcement's ability to prosecute fentanyl traffickers and act as a deterrent.

The HALT Fentanyl Act also promotes research by improving the registration process to eligible individuals so that they can conduct studies on schedule I substances with appropriate safeguards.

In the Energy and Commerce Committee, we have heard testimony that there may be as many as 4,800 individual analogues or fentanyl-related substances. Our experts at the NIH, the FDA, and others have studied roughly 30 to 40 of those 4,800 analogues or fentanyl-related substances.

By encouraging research of schedule I substances like fentanyl analogues, we can better understand how these substances work and how we can prevent potentially harmful impacts in the future or even find a better use or a better opportunity than the current fentanyl that we use.

Because fentanyl has a proven medical use, it is considered a schedule II narcotic, as the Speaker knows, having practiced medicine for many years.

Illicit derivatives of fentanyl, also called fentanyl analogues, currently have not demonstrated a medical value.

Let me be clear. This bill will have no impact whatsoever on physicians' ability to administer fentanyl in medical settings.

The HALT Fentanyl Act deals specifically with fentanyl analogues or fentanyl-related substances, not medicinal fentanyl.

The Biden administration even released a statement when this bill passed through the House last Congress stating that they supported permanent scheduling and streamlined research for fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances.

We must address this bipartisan issue immediately and not allow this temporary extension to expire.

Once fentanyl analogues are permanently scheduled in schedule I, Congress will continue to build off this work to continue to address the illicit fentanyl crisis.

According to a 2021 GAO report, there was a 90 percent decrease in these fentanyl analogues coming into our country the year they were first placed into schedule I.

This bill is a critical step in combating the opioid crisis in our country because China and Mexico are heavily involved in this business. China is sending the precursors of fentanyl and fentanyl analogues to the cartels in Mexico, who are then bringing it across our border.

By making these analogs permanently schedule I, it removes the incentive for the cartels to traffic these analogues or fentanyl-related substance drugs into our country. China even realized the risk of fentanyl analogues and permanently scheduled those analogues on their strictest schedule. Other countries have followed suit and done the same.

Last Congress, this bill cleared through the Energy and Commerce Committee on a bipartisan basis and then passed on the House floor with 74 Democrats voting in favor.

The bill has the support of many law enforcement agencies and other entities calling for the need to pass the bill as it is.

We must act quickly to make the scheduling order permanent before it expires again at the end of March.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the legislation at hand, the so-called HALT Fentanyl Act, all I can say is folks on the other side must be living on another freaking planet.

□ 1230

Mr. Speaker, Republicans want to come down here and lecture people about fentanyl. Let's talk about fentanyl.

President Donald J. Trump, during his very first week in office, pardoned a drug dealer who helped fentanyl pour into our country. Let me repeat that nice and slowly so it sinks in.

As one of his first acts in office, Donald J. Trump pardoned a drug dealer who was sentenced to life in Federal prison who let fentanyl into America.

I just have a simple question for my friends on the other side: Why? Why? Why isn't this guy still in jail?

Why would Donald Trump let out a drug dealer like this?

The guy is sentenced to life in Federal prison. I wish I had an answer. Maybe they can explain it to us. They like to talk so much about pardons, but they are silent on this one. We hear crickets from the other side. It makes you wonder, Mr. Speaker, what is going on here.

Let me read the ICE press release for when this guy was arrested.

Are you ready for this, Mr. Speaker?

ICE says that the guy Donald Trump pardoned helped "thousands of drug dealers and other unlawful vendors distribute hundreds of kilograms of illegal drugs and other unlawful goods and services to more than 100,000 buyers and to launder hundreds of millions of dollars deriving from these unlawful transactions."

It goes on to explain how he distributed narcotics that were linked to overdose deaths across the country.

People died as a result of this criminality.

This is a guy who made the cartels rich, who made it easier for China to mail fentanyl into our country. This is a guy who let the drugs pour into our communities, tearing families apart, getting people sick, exposing people to danger, and causing numerous deaths.

He was pardoned. He was pardoned by Donald Trump.

It takes a lot of nerve, Mr. Speaker, to let out the fentanyl guy and then come down here with a straight face and tell people that we are all about stopping drugs coming into America.

Let's not get started about the funding freeze that Trump is trying to put into place. Trump wants to block hundreds of billions of dollars in bipartisan

funding for law enforcement, including blocking money going after fentanyl. He wants to block State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program. Republicans are in court right now fighting to get it all.

Why are they doing this?

The answer is very simple, actually. They are stealing. They are stealing taxpayer dollars. Republicans want to steal from you, the American people, to give Elon and Trump more tax breaks and more tax write-offs for their private jets, their mansions, islands, and yachts. It is corruption: good, old-fashioned, plain and simple corruption.

Then they will come down here to the floor and pretend to care about fentanyl while they pardon the drug dealers who profit off of people's pain and gut the programs that keep drugs off our streets.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Let's talk about those tariffs, yes, the tariffs that Trump kept bragging about that he promised he was going to slap on our allies Canada and Mexico. If he was successful, they would have sent domestic costs on food, gas, and household goods spiraling out of control. Then, when people started paying attention, when we stood up for the workers and when the public fought back, Trump folded. He lost. He rescinded his funding freeze. He walked back his tariffs, and he got nothing in exchange.

Trump wants to give us this impression that he has power and strength. He really has none. He backed down on his funding freeze. He backed down on his tariffs. The courts are rejecting his executive orders because guess what, Mr. Speaker? He is not king, and we are fighting back.

I can promise you this, Mr. Speaker: We are going to fight back with every single ounce of strength we have to prevent this President and his billionaire sidekick from undermining the rule of law and stealing from the people we were elected to protect.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I understand there are all kinds of concerns on the other side of the aisle, but we are talking about the HALT Fentanyl Act.

I could stand here and talk about Burma. We heard today that the President has extended the emergency situation with Burma, that undemocratic country where they overthrew the democratically elected government and how Burma, also known as Myanmar, is the largest cultivator of opium products and the producer of heroin globally, second only to Afghanistan. That doesn't have anything to do with the HALT Fentanyl Act. The HALT Fentanyl Act is a good bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to my good friend from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY), who will talk about the bill some more.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support today of the rule which provides consideration of the HALT Fentanyl Act. For 4 long years, the American people suffered from an administration that time and again refused to take seriously the flood of deadly fentanyl-related substances and analogues flooding into our communities.

Fentanyl-related overdose has remained the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18 to 49 for much of the last several years. Millions of families have been torn apart, and our towns and our cities have suffered from the blight of crime and homelessness that has grown from this epidemic. Not one corner of our country has been left untouched by the fentanyl crisis. Urban, suburban, rural, rich, poor, old, and young lives have been torn apart, and families have been torn apart.

The previous administration could have addressed this tragedy head-on by securing our borders and protecting our communities, but time and again, they refused, and Democrats here in the House of Representatives supported that decision.

The HALT Fentanyl Act before us today permanently schedules fentanyl-related substances on schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act, a crucial step that will ensure that law enforcement and our communities are empowered to address this deadly scourge head-on.

To my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who spent years cheering an administration that allowed the flood of these substances to pour in from our southern border unchecked: Now is your time to support one important step in combating the epidemic that has taken too many lives and destroyed too many homes and communities.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the legislation under this rule today, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of the HALT Fentanyl Act.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no response from either of the gentlemen about why it was okay for Trump to pardon the guy who let the fentanyl into this country and who made hundreds of millions of dollars off of fentanyl. He was sentenced to life in prison, and he let him out.

You are okay with that, yet you are coming down here saying that you really care about fighting fentanyl in our country. There has been not a peep from the other side justifying what Trump did.

One of his first acts as President was to pardon this guy who received life in prison for his crime. He received life in prison.

Mr. Speaker, I urge we defeat the previous question. If we do, then I will offer an amendment to the rule to bring up H.R. 4531, the SUPPORT for

Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act.

Mr. Speaker, the SUPPORT Act reauthorization would permanently place xylazine in schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act. However, unlike the bill before us today, it doesn't stop at scheduling.

The bill reauthorizes resources for residential substance use disorder treatment for pregnant and postpartum women. It provides resources for training and education related to fentanyl and other illicit substances for first responders, and it ensures that Medicaid beneficiaries have access to medication-assisted treatment.

Here is the best part, Mr. Speaker. This bill already passed last Congress with 386 votes. One hundred ninety Republicans voted for it, and it was included in the end-of-year spending package.

Guess what happened, Mr. Speaker?

Elon Musk tanked that deal for reasons that no one seems to be able to explain to me, and this good bill was never signed into law.

Mr. Speaker, passing this bill would mean, to quote the chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce who helped lead this bill in the last Congress, that this bill could help save lives by preventing overdoses and providing access to immediate and long-term care recovery services.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment into the RECORD, along with any extraneous material, immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO) to introduce that proposal.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member MCGOVERN for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, if the previous question is defeated, Democrats plan to offer a vote on the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act.

The SUPPORT Act, which House Republicans unceremoniously abandoned after billionaire-in-chief Elon Musk tanked the end-of-year bipartisan package, would have reauthorized a wide range of prevention, treatment, and recovery programs that included a 2-year extension of scheduling for fentanyl-related substances.

This bipartisan approach, which focused not only on disrupting the drug supply but also investing in the full spectrum of prevention, treatment, and recovery, passed the House overwhelmingly by a vote of 386-37, as was made mention by Representative MCGOVERN, in the 118th Congress.

Passing this vital legislation would have helped continue our progress against the overdose epidemic which finally saw overdose deaths start to decline during the Biden administration

after skyrocketing during the first Trump administration.

It is indeed clear that Republicans just aren't serious about addressing this crisis. They are using cheap sound bites and photo ops to exploit parents' pain and to distract Americans while President Trump, Elon Musk, and their cronies rob us blind and dismantle the very programs that individuals rely on to get treatment and live a life of recovery for their situations.

With last week's Federal funding freeze, Trump and Musk immediately halted over some \$8 billion in programs working to combat the opioid crisis, including: \$6.5 billion for SAMHSA that would support naloxone distribution in our communities, drug-free community programs to keep kids off drugs, and medication-assisted treatment programs. It also authorized \$1.5 billion for addiction research at the National Institutes of Health to help deliver the next generation of lifesaving treatments.

Unfortunately, that is not all.

As we speak, Republicans are cooking up plans to steal over \$2.5 trillion from Medicaid, jeopardizing healthcare for 72 million people and decimating the single biggest payer for substance use care, just so that they can give more tax breaks to Elon Musk and his billionaire buddies.

Cutting lifesaving prevention and treatment services to the bone while trying to restart a failed 1980s war on drugs?

America should just say no.

In closing, I urge my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to defeat the previous question so that we can vote on a real plan to tackle this epidemic that continues to ravage our communities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I keep thinking I am here to talk about the HALT Fentanyl Act, but they keep talking about all kinds of other things.

My colleagues have acknowledged that the HALT Fentanyl Act passed in the last Congress with a large majority, yet here we are using this as a vehicle to talk about everything else they think is going wrong in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I have a little bill here. It does some good. We ought to pass it. If my colleagues want to talk about lots of other stuff, they are entitled to. That is their right. However, I don't want the focus taken off the HALT Fentanyl Act. It is a good bill. It helps law enforcement. It helps slow down the flood across the southern border. That is what we are here about today.

I know if the motion on the previous question fails, then they are going to introduce a different bill. However, my understanding is their bill completely eliminates and doesn't have anything in their language about halting fentanyl.

This is something a large majority of Congress wants to get done. Let's get it done. Let's stop all the rhetoric. Let's stop trying to point fingers at us and everybody else for other things. Let's just do our job. I think that is what the American people want us to do.

In fact, I hear a lot of times from my constituents back home that they are tired of seeing these gigantic bills. It sounds like what my colleagues on the other side want is some more gigantic bills that people vote on. It is kind of like what the former Speaker said: We have to vote for it so we can find out what is in it.

I would rather vote on bills that I know what is in it. That is why I read all the bills if I plan to vote for it.

I helped write this bill. I am the lead sponsor of this bill. It is an easy bill to read. It is pretty straightforward in what it does, what it is supposed to do, and what we are trying to do. President Biden thought it was okay. He issued a statement in favor of it last term. This term President Trump says that he is in favor of it.

This is a bipartisan approach to solve a problem.

Does it solve all the world's problems, Mr. Speaker?

Of course it does not, but it solves a problem that our law enforcement has that helps the bad guys, the people making the precursors in China, the people in the cartels in Mexico flooding across our southern border with these harmful fentanyl-related substances and analogues. It makes it easier for our law enforcement people to focus on illegal fentanyl.

□ 1245

Mr. Speaker, fentanyl is legal for medicinal purposes, and it will be even after this bill.

There is something else that Democrats haven't mentioned. I mentioned it briefly, but I will talk about it a little bit further, Mr. Speaker. That is the component in this bill that allows for research on the 4,800 other related substances or analogues that we believe are out there. It is a rough number. Nobody knows until they get in and start experimenting, but we heard that testimony in the Energy and Commerce Committee.

There might be some benefit to some other analogue. There might be some benefit, but we don't want it out there on our streets or being used for medicinal reasons until we know for sure that it does something positive for society.

Right now, all the analogues that we have seen are either inert or just as bad as the illegal use of fentanyl, so this bill needs to be passed.

I understand the minority doesn't want to talk about this. My Democratic colleagues want to talk about everything else, but that is not why we are here today.

When I came to Congress, I pledged to read the bills. I pledged to talk about what it is we are talking about

today and not talk about everything else in the world that I think we might be able to fix someday or that we might ought to do someday. There is a process for that.

As my friend Terry Kilgore used to tell me all the time, somebody would come up with an idea, and then they would want to put on some kind of an amendment or change the bill around when we had a nice, little, simple bill. Mr. Kilgore is a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and he was my seatmate. He came up with a famous phrase when people wanted to rearrange the bill in a way that he didn't think was proper or put an amendment on it that would completely change the bill or, in this case, defeat the motion of the previous question in order to defeat the HALT Fentanyl Act and put forward some other bill. He would say: Well, you might have some points to make. I would say to the gentleman: Get your own bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, what would help end the illegal fentanyl problem here would be Donald Trump not pardoning a drug kingpin, essentially, who brought illegal fentanyl into our country and who was sentenced to life in prison in a Federal court. What would have been a strong signal would have been not to pardon somebody like that.

Mr. Speaker, I get why my friends don't want to talk about that. Republicans don't want to get on the bad side of the President because then Republican Members may get a primary or then Elon Musk might send all kinds of money into their primary. I get all of that.

If we are serious here about dealing with fentanyl, we should at least all be able to say what the President did was wrong.

Maybe the gentleman wasn't listening to the debate on the previous question, but the gentleman from New York (Mr. LANGWORTHY) talked for 3 minutes about an alternative bill that would help deal with this problem.

This was a bill that got 386 votes in this House in the last Congress. The bill received 386 votes. It was in the final package that we were all going to vote on, by the way, that Republican leadership agreed with and our leadership agreed with and the Republicans and Democrats in the Senate agreed with. It was in that bill, but then Elon Musk sabotaged that bill.

Mr. Speaker, I get it. I have been here for a while. Before I was a Member, I worked here as a staffer for George McGovern, no relation, and for Congressman Joe Moakley. Let me tell you, Republicans today do not hold the same values as Republicans from back then.

Republicans used to be for backing the blue. Trump pardoned people who beat police officers. Right now, he is gutting the FBI, which the Republicans

used to believe was the citadel of law and order.

Republicans used to stand for cutting the deficit. Now, the majority is spending night and day planning to jam through a tax cut for the ultrarich without pay-fors, which will blow up the deficit by trillions of dollars. It is what my Republican colleagues did in 2017 for their billionaire tax cuts.

Republicans spent decades claiming my colleagues on the other side of the aisle were the champions of free trade. Just this past week, Trump and the Republican Party started a trade war with our neighbors, not to mention the majority spoke nonstop about inflation for the past 2 years but seem to be fine with slapping this tariff tax on their constituents that is going to make prices across the board in this country go sky high.

Is there any principle today's version of the Republican Party won't abandon? Is there anything Trump could do that Republicans wouldn't support or would even question?

It would be almost comical to see how much my Republican colleagues are willing to bend down and kiss the ring if we didn't currently find ourselves in multiple constitutional crises at the hands of Trump and his cronies.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we can't even get Republicans to say that it was wrong for the President of the United States to pardon this individual who was serving life in prison for bringing fentanyl into our communities and killing our constituents, the fact that the majority can't even raise the question of whether it was the wrong thing to do, tells you everything you need to know.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

**THE SPEAKER** pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is kind of interesting. I keep thinking we are talking about the HALT Fentanyl Act, and then I hear all this other stuff.

Earlier, one of my colleagues said that we were cooking up some kind of a plan to cut—I forget what the number was now—\$2.5 trillion or \$2.7 trillion out of Medicaid. I haven't heard of any such plan being cooked up. I think that is just hyperbole, but that is my opinion.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman keeps asking about a pardon or about somebody who was pardoned. Well, I don't know if he has noticed or not, but I am not the President of the United States. I don't have the power to pardon. I don't get the information put on my desk about various individual pardons.

I didn't make any comments about pardons by the previous President when many people were pardoned or were sitting on death row and had sentences commuted. That is not what we are here about today.

We can get down into that trap if we want to, but I am just telling you that we are here today to talk about a rule for a simple bill that the majority of this House supports. I believe it is an overwhelming majority. I don't know if my colleagues admitted it was exactly 74, but they admitted it was a big vote last year. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle admitted it was a part of a package that the minority wanted to see pass on the floor at the end of last year.

I thought we were here to talk about this. I recognize that it is a free-for-all on the floor, but I just hate to get into all those kinds of things and start talking about this or that and, whether crossing the line or not, somehow casting aspersions that Members over here don't have independent wills. We certainly do, and I think my colleagues might recognize that from some of the things I said last night when I was being questioned.

Do I support the President? Well, of course, I do. Do I agree with everything he does? No.

As the old saying goes, I don't agree with my wife all the time. She certainly doesn't agree with me most of the time.

The bottom line is that I think the President is moving us in the right direction. One of those right directions would be to pass the HALT Fentanyl Act. Another is closing down the border, shutting that border down.

If Democrats want to talk about drugs coming across our southern border and want to point to an individual who is thought to be primarily responsible for some of that, how about the hundreds and thousands of people who were used by the cartels to bring illicit substances, whether it be at ports of entry or other places, across our southern border?

The President is cracking down on that, too, but that is not what this bill is about. This bill is about making sure that when our law enforcement officers arrest somebody and their preliminary examination indicates that what they have is significant, or even a small amount but generally significant amounts of a fentanyl-related substance, that when they go to court, they don't have somebody arguing in court that, wait a minute, this is not the fentanyl on schedule II, that this is a fentanyl-related substance but it is a left-handed molecule instead of a right-handed molecule or a right-handed molecule instead of a left-handed molecule.

I can say that, as a former defense attorney, I loved those kinds of arguments. As a Congressman, it is our job to shut those arguments down. The HALT Fentanyl Act stops those arguments from being made in court, which are basically spurious attempts to help drug dealers.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues are not trying to help drug dealers. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are just here to try to make some

other points today. Let's talk about this bill and the good that this bill can do.

My Democratic colleagues brought up substituting this bill with the SUPPORT Act. I am a cosponsor of the SUPPORT Act, which is carried by the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, BRETT GUTHRIE. That bill has a very good chance of passing this body, so let's let that bill go through its process, and let's let this bill, the HALT Fentanyl Act, finish out this process, get across to the Senate, get signed into law by the President, and start doing good work.

The Speaker might be asking why we have to do this at this moment. The answer is that we have had a rolling series of temporary bills on making the fentanyl-related substances schedule I because we all recognize the danger that these present to the American public.

Let's make it permanent and give our scientists an opportunity to look at some of those other 4,800 analogues or fentanyl-related substances to see if there is anything there that might be beneficial to mankind, that might be a reversal of an overdose, that might be a better and less-addictive pain reliever. Let's let them do that research.

They can't do that research without the HALT Fentanyl Act, and the efforts of the defense attorneys for the cartels can't be crippled by constantly passing temporary bills because any day that it is not in effect is a day that lawyers will take advantage of.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the gentleman is new to the Rules Committee, and I think this may be his first time on the floor handling a rule.

I will remind the gentleman that this is the rule debate. We are not having general debate on the underlying bill. The rule debates are about the majority's agenda, what Republicans are bringing to the floor and what Republicans are not bringing to the floor.

The majority could have brought to the floor the bill that we want to bring to the floor, that we talked about in the previous question debate, that passed overwhelmingly in a bipartisan vote in the last Congress, and that my Republican friends allowed to get blown up at the last minute.

Basically, I am going to take my time during the rule debate to talk about the Republicans' unpopular, crummy agenda for the American people: raising prices on consumers and ignoring all the concerns that everyday people have.

We are also going to talk about the fact that, when it comes to fentanyl, one of Donald Trump's first acts was to pardon a criminal who brought fentanyl into this country and who was sentenced to life in Federal prison.

Mr. Speaker, I get it that the gentleman doesn't want to have an opinion

on that or voice an opinion on that, but, really, is it that hard? I don't know what is so difficult to condemn there.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of the agenda, I am looking at *The New York Times*: "Trump Proposing Takeover of Gaza as U.S. Territory." Do Republicans' constituents want to have their sons or daughters sent to Gaza to be in the middle of that violence?

This is the guy who also now wants to invade Greenland. He wants to take over Panama. He wants to annex Canada. He wants to now occupy Gaza.

Mr. Speaker, we have 42 million people in this country who are hungry. Whatever happened to America First? Whatever happened to helping people in this country? Whatever happened to lowering prices?

Instead, we get this. This is like a warmonger here. I mean, come on.

Again, we had an agreement on a bipartisan bill that would address the underlying concerns that the gentleman raises here, yet it was blown up at the last minute.

Mr. Speaker, the rule debate is about the Republican agenda. It is about the crappy agenda of this majority in the House of Representatives, which is not fighting for regular people and not fighting for the people who I represent but instead is doing the bidding for billionaires like Elon Musk and others.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ), the distinguished member of the Rules Committee.

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Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. Mr. Speaker, we are in a moment of constitutional crisis. These days will define what we stand for. They will define who we stand with.

Yet in this time of crisis, Republicans are rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Republicans are using the precious floor time we are given to put forth watered-down fentanyl bills like the one in this rule. Let's remember that all of these bills require a Federal agency to enforce it.

Let me remind my Republican colleagues that their President granted Elon Musk the authority to dismantle our Federal agencies. Musk and his DOGE—I like to call it dodgy because they seem to dodge any kind of authority and accountability—are intent on destroying our Federal Government and the essential services it provides.

Mr. Speaker, I remind my colleagues to remember their power and remember their constitutional duty.

Musk didn't take an oath to protect the Constitution. We did. Voters sent us here to protect their interests. Congress alone has the power to fund our agencies. A billionaire who was not elected and has not probably even passed a security clearance cannot destroy our Federal agencies. We will not stand for it, and I hope you stand with us to protect our Federal agencies, including the FBI who would be the ones

who would enforce and investigate and go after fentanyl trafficking.

My phones are ringing off the hook from constituents who are frightened and terrified and angry about what Musk is doing. They don't want billionaire tech titans to dismantle Federal agencies or gain access to their most private data.

We definitely can't address the fentanyl crisis, like the bill in today's rule claims to do, if Trump and Republicans get their way on the Federal funding freeze, if they get their way on a hiring freeze.

Now remember, this intention that we have seen from this administration, that we are not hearing them stand up against, would actually destroy the FBI. It would take away funds from addiction treatment, which would be essential to save lives. It would take away funds from interdiction technology, which is what we need to stop fentanyl from flowing in and killing our neighbors and my friends and my constituents. My constituents want us to fund effective border safety measures, not engage in the chaos and demonization we have seen from this administration.

I have also heard loud and clear from my communities in New Mexico about the chaos that Trump's orders have created. Trump is about chaos and Trump is about corruption.

Yesterday, I went to the Treasury Department to demand answers about Musk's power grab and information heist. They didn't let Members of Congress in that building, which belongs to the American people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from New Mexico.

Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ. They didn't let us in that building because they don't want Americans to know what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all my Republican colleagues: Would you let Elon Musk and his interns rummage through your savings account, your tax return, your children's personal data?

I just don't understand the point of putting bills like this on the floor if we are not going to have the courage to stand up to Elon Musk and his rip off of Congress' power.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote against the rule.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEWHOUSE). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, darn, I wish I had known 40 minutes ago we could talk about anything we wanted to, that this time was not really to talk about the rule present before us today or the underlying bill, but was to talk about whatever we wanted to, whatever is on our agenda, their agenda.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, this is why the American people don't have

confidence in Congress, because they can't follow the bouncing ball. We are here to talk about the HALT Fentanyl Act, and we are talking about everything including the kitchen sink.

If I had only known that 40 minutes ago, I could have brought over all my CRAs that I am interested in getting passed, all my bills that I think are fascinating and interesting that I can't seem to get out of committee, at least not in the past. I could have talked about all kinds of things.

I understand that may not be the practice of the Rules Committee. I am new. The gentleman is absolutely right to remind me of that. I have no problem with that. I just didn't know that we could talk about whatever we wanted to when the subject of the day is: Are we going to pass a rule that ultimately we hope will be put in place for the debate and passage of the HALT Fentanyl Act.

Then I heard, amongst a number of things today that I thought were just kind of odd, that my bill, the HALT Fentanyl Act, had been watered down.

Well, that is news to me because the bill, with the exception of changing a couple of paragraph numbers, the lettering on the paragraphs to make sure we were alphabetically correct, is exactly the way I introduced it. I don't think that is a watering down. A watering down is when you take a bill that is 20 or 30 pages long and you make it into a 2-page bill and you have it do half of what it was supposed to do.

What this bill was supposed to do, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what this bill does. It takes and makes a permanent schedule I classification for all of the roughly 4,800 fentanyl-related substances or analogues. It provides for research on those fentanyl-related substances or analogues at our research institutions with certain safeguards to make sure we can continue to do research so that maybe we can find a better path forward, something that may help with our drug addiction issues, something that may be a better, less addictive pain reliever.

We want that research done, but until we have the evidence that one of those 4,800 analogues or fentanyl-related substances actually does good, we need to make them schedule I. They need to be on there so that the cartels can't use this as some trick in the courtroom to get out of trouble, to get a proverbial get-out-of-jail-free card.

My colleagues want to talk about everything else coming down the road, including an individual—and I haven't reviewed his file—who they claim was involved in the drug trade and who was pardoned.

I haven't heard them talk about Lairon Graham of Buffalo, convicted of heading a drug conspiracy and selling fentanyl, crack cocaine, and heroin, who was pardoned by the previous President, Mr. Biden.

I haven't heard them talk about Valentino Shine, convicted of narcotic sales, along with sex trafficking and



distribution of crack cocaine, who was pardoned by the previous President.

Now, I personally don't think any of that is relevant to today's discussion, and I recognize that that is apparently the practice of the Rules Committee. I find it surprising. I think it is a sloppy practice, but if that is the practice, then next time I will be sure to bring my wish list with me and we can talk about everything except the bill we are supposed to be talking about.

It does make you wonder and think that everybody at home watching this, both of them, are confused because we are not talking about the bill that we are supposed to be talking about. I hope Congress some day gets around to talking about the bill that it is supposed to talk about, whether it is my bill or somebody else's bill.

Today, I will try to make my remarks as much as I can about passage of the rule for the HALT Fentanyl Act.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, does the gentleman really think that people dislike Congress because we are debating issues, because we are debating what is on their mind? No. I think people dislike Congress because politicians say one thing and do another.

They are on the floor today talking about the need to combat fentanyl and then are silent when the President of the United States pardons a criminal sentenced to life in prison for flooding our streets with fentanyl.

That is what people get frustrated with. People are frustrated that we had a deal on a bill at the end of last Congress that everybody signed off on. It was fine. At the last minute, Elon Musk comes in and blows it up, and now we can't bring the bill up again. That is what people are frustrated with.

My Republican friends like to talk about America First. Look at the front page of The New York Times today: "Trump Proposing Takeover of Gaza as U.S. Territory."

I have to tell you, people voted for lower egg prices, not for a Middle East Mar-a-Lago. People did not vote to send their sons and daughters into the tunnels of Gaza so that Jared Kushner and Donald Trump can build Trump Tower Gaza. That is not what they voted for.

People want to talk about issues. They want us to deal with issues that will impact everyday life and lower the cost of living. In the first weeks, we have seen nothing from this President or the Republican majority here to deal with that.

Don't tell me that people don't like Congress because we debate issues. I am sorry. We are debating your agenda, even though it is unpopular.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD an article from the Associated Press titled: "Elon Musk's DOGE commission gains

access to sensitive Treasury payment systems."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

[From AP News, Feb. 1, 2025]

ELON MUSK'S DOGE COMMISSION GAINS ACCESS TO SENSITIVE TREASURY PAYMENT SYSTEMS: AP SOURCES

(By Fatima Hussein)

The Department of Government Efficiency, run by President Donald Trump's billionaire adviser and Tesla CEO Elon Musk, has gained access to sensitive Treasury data including Social Security and Medicare customer payment systems, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The move by DOGE, a Trump administration task force assigned to find ways to fire federal workers, cut programs and slash federal regulations, means it could have wide leeway to access important taxpayer data, among other things.

The New York Times first reported the news of the group's access of the massive federal payment system. The two people who spoke to The Associated Press spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The highest-ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, Ron Wyden of Oregon, on Friday sent a letter to Trump's Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent expressing concern that "officials associated with Musk may have intended to access these payment systems to illegally withhold payments to any number of programs."

"To put it bluntly, these payment systems simply cannot fail, and any politically motivated meddling in them risks severe damage to our country and the economy," Wyden said.

The news also comes after Treasury's acting Deputy Secretary David Lebryk resigned from his position at Treasury after more than 30 years of service. The Washington Post on Friday reported that Lebryk resigned his position after Musk and his DOGE organization requested access to sensitive Treasury data.

"The Fiscal Service performs some of the most vital functions in government," Lebryk said in a letter to Treasury employees sent out Friday. "Our work may be unknown to most of the public, but that doesn't mean it isn't exceptionally important. I am grateful for having been able to work alongside some of the nation's best and most talented operations staff."

The letter did not mention a DOGE request to access Treasury payments.

Musk on Saturday responded to a post on his social media platform X about the departure of Lebryk: "the @DOGE team discovered, among other things, that payment approval officers at Treasury were instructed always to approve payments, even to known fraudulent or terrorist groups. They literally never denied a payment in their entire career. Not even once."

He did not provide proof of this claim.

DOGE was originally headed by Musk and former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, who jointly vowed to cut billions from the federal budget and usher in "mass headcount reductions across the federal bureaucracy."

Ramaswamy has since left DOGE as he mulls a run for governor of Ohio.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert into the RECORD an article from The New Republic titled: "25-year-old Elon Musk Crony Has Total Control Over Treasury Payments."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

[From the New Republic, Feb. 4, 2025]

25-YEAR-OLD ELON MUSK CRONY HAS TOTAL CONTROL OVER TREASURY PAYMENTS

(By Hafiz Rashid)

One of Elon Musk's handpicked operatives for his fake "Department of Government Efficiency" has been given complete access to critical payment systems at the Department of the Treasury, despite being only 25 years old.

Marko Elez, whose total work experience consists of working for Musk's companies SpaceX and X (formerly Twitter), has administrator privileges on systems that are responsible for 95 percent of payments made by the U.S. government including Social Security checks, tax refunds, and virtually all contract payments, Wired reports. This contradicts earlier reports that Musk's henchmen only had "read-only" access to Treasury data.

Wired, citing two unnamed sources, reports that Elez has the ability to write code on the Payment Automation Manager and Secure Payment System at the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, which control government payments that amount to more than a fifth of the U.S. economy. Elez's level of access could allow him to bypass security measures and possibly cause irreversible damage to these systems. Talking Points Memo further reports that Elez has already used his power to significantly rewrite code for the payment systems.

"You could do anything with these privileges," one source with knowledge of the systems told Wired, adding that they couldn't see a reason that such access was necessary for hunting down fraud or assessing how payments are disbursed, as DOGE claims it is doing.

"Technically I don't see why this couldn't happen," a federal IT worker told the magazine Monday regarding whether a DOGE worker would get such a level of government access. "If you would have asked me a week ago, I'd have told you that this kind of thing would never in a million years happen. But now, who the f\*\*\* knows."

Musk and his cronies have already taken control of federal workers' private data by installing an illegal commercial server at the Office of Personnel Management, giving them access to databases containing federal employees' Social Security numbers, home addresses, medical histories, and other sensitive personal information. Senior government officials at OPM have even been locked out of employee databases.

Many, if not most, of Musk's associates that he's used in his government takeover are young and inexperienced young men between the ages of 19 and 26, like Elez. Whether the tech mogul or the people doing his bidding even have proper security clearances is not known, which would definitely make their efforts illegal, if they weren't already. But with Donald Trump taking over federal law enforcement and prosecutors threatening critics of DOGE, who, if anyone, will take action?

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to include in the RECORD an article from Wired titled: "Federal Workers Sue to Disconnect DOGE Server."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

[From Wired, Feb. 4, 2025]

# FEDERAL WORKERS SUE TO DISCONNECT DOGE SERVER

(By Dell Cameron)

Federal employees are seeking a temporary restraining order as part of a class action lawsuit accusing a group of Elon Musk's associates of allegedly operating an illegally connected server from the fifth floor of the US Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) headquarters in Washington, DC.

An attorney representing two federal workers—Jane Does 1 and 2—filed a motion this morning arguing that the server's continued operation not only violates federal law but is potentially exposing vast quantities of government staffers' personal information to hostile foreign adversaries through unencrypted email.

A copy of the motion, filed in the DC District Court by National Security Counselors, a Washington-area public-interest law firm, was obtained by WIRED exclusively in advance. WIRED previously reported that Musk had installed several lackeys in OPM's top offices, including individuals with ties to xAI, Neuralink, and other companies he owns.

The initial lawsuit, filed on January 27, cites reports that Musk's associates illegally connected a server to a government network for the purposes of harvesting information, including the names and email accounts of federal employees. The server was installed on the agency's premises, the complaint alleges, without OPM—the government's human resources department—conducting a mandatory privacy impact assessment required under federal law.

Under the 2002 E-Government Act, agencies are required to perform privacy assessments prior to making “substantial changes to existing information technology” when handling information “in identifiable form.” Notably, prior to the installation of the server, OPM did not have the technical capability to email the entire federal workforce from a single email account.

“[A]t some point after 20 January 2025, OPM allowed unknown individuals to simply bypass its existing systems and security protocols,” Tuesday's motion claims, “for the stated purpose of being able to communicate directly with those individuals without involving other agencies. In short, the sole purpose of these new systems was expediency.”

OPM did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

If the motion is granted, OPM would be forced to disconnect the server until the assessment is done. As a consequence, the Trump administration's plans to drastically reduce the size of the federal workforce would likely face delays. The email account linked to the server—HR@opm.gov—is currently being used to gather information from federal workers accepting buyouts under the admin's “deferred resignation program,” which is set to expire on February 6.

“Under the law, a temporary restraining order is an extraordinary remedy,” notes National Security Counselors' executive director, Kel McClanahan. “But this is an extraordinary situation.”

Before issuing a restraining order, courts apply what's known as the “balance of equities” doctrine, weighing the burdens and costs on both parties. In this case, however, McClanahan argues that the injunction would inflict “no hardship” on the government whatsoever. February 6 is an “arbitrary deadline,” he says, and the administration could simply continue to implement the resignation program “through preexisting channels.”

“We can't wait for the normal course of litigation when all that information is just

sitting there in some system nobody knows about with who knows what protections,” McClanahan says. “In a normal case, we might be able to at least count on the inspector general to do something, but Trump fired her, so all bets are off.”

The motion further questions whether OPM violated the Administrative Procedure Act, which prohibits federal agencies from taking actions “not in accordance with the law.” Under the APA, courts may “compel agency action”—such as a private assessment—when it is “unlawfully withheld.”

Employees at various agencies were reportedly notified last month to be on the lookout for messages originating from the HR@opm.gov account. McClanahan's complaint points to a January 23 email from acting Homeland Security secretary Benjamin Huffman instructing DHS employees that the HR@opm.gov account “can be considered trusted.” In the following days, emails were blasted out twice across the executive branch instructing federal workers to reply “Yes” in both cases.

The same account was later used to transmit the “Fork in the Road” missive promoting the Trump administration's legally dubious “deferred resignation program,” which claims to offer federal workers the opportunity to quit but continue receiving paychecks through September. Workers who wished to participate in the program were instructed to reply to the email with “Resign.”

As WIRED has reported, even the new HR chief of DOGE, Musk's task force, was unable to answer basic questions about the offer.

The legal authority underlying the program is unclear, and federal employee union leaders are warning workers not to blindly assume they will actually get paid. In a floor speech last week, Senator Tim Kaine advised workers not to be fooled: “There's no budget line item to pay people who are not showing up for work.” Patty Murray, ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, similarly warned Monday: “There is no funding allocated to agencies to pay staff for this offer.”

McClanahan's lawsuit highlights the government's response to the OPM hack of 2015, which compromised personnel records on more than 22 million people, including some who'd undergone background checks to obtain security clearances. A congressional report authored by House Republicans following the breach pinned the incident on a “breakdown in communications” between OPM's chief information officer and its inspector general: “The future effectiveness of the agency's information technology and security efforts,” it says, “will depend on a strong relationship between these two entities moving forward.”

OPM's inspector general, Krista Boyd, was fired by President Donald Trump in the midst of the “Friday night purge” on January 24—one day after the first HR@opm.gov email was sent.

“We are witnessing an unprecedented exfiltration and seizure of the most sensitive kinds of information by unelected, unvetted people with no experience, responsibility, or right to it,” says Sean Vitka, policy director at the Demand Progress Education Fund, which is supporting the action. “Millions of Americans and the collective interests of the United States desperately need emergency intervention from the courts. The constitutional crisis is already here.”

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert into the RECORD an opinion article from The Washington Post titled: “Elon Musk has your Social Security number. It's as scary as it sounds.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 5, 2025]

# [OPINION] ELON MUSK HAS YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER. IT'S AS SCARY AS IT SOUNDS

(By Natasha Sarin)

David A. Lebyrk had a volatile end to his 36 years serving the public at the Treasury Department last week. On Monday, he was the acting treasury secretary. By the end of the week, he had unexpectedly retired.

I worked with Lebyrk when I was on President Joe Biden's Treasury team, so I am not an unbiased observer. But leaders on both sides of the aisle have positive things to say about him. President Donald Trump's nominee to be deputy treasury secretary, Michael Faulkender, recalled working with Lebyrk during the first Trump administration and finding him “relaxed and under control” and not a political actor.

It was those traits that made him a natural fit to serve as Treasury's fiscal assistant secretary and oversee what is essentially the federal government's accounts payable department. It is an immensely important job: The Bureau of the Fiscal Service cuts the checks that go to households and businesses and, in recent years, has been at the front of the various debt showdowns, because only they can ascertain the “X” date when the government will, absent congressional action, hit the debt limit.

But it's not a political job. It's mechanical, keeping track of the money coming in and going out. This means the bureau has access to incredibly sensitive information about everyone in the country—all of our Social Security numbers and bank account information—because they need it to get people their tax refunds and Social Security checks.

Late last week, Lebyrk left the agency after a rift with members of the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, who demanded access to Treasury's payments system. Secretary Scott Bessent then gave them that access, ostensibly because the team, which lacks the experience or background to handle such sensitive information, would be able to sift through government payments to cut fraudulent, wasteful spending.

Let's get some facts straight. It is totally reasonable to be concerned about fraudulent or mistaken payments made by the federal government. The Government Accountability Office recently estimated that somewhere between 3 and 7 percent of what the government pays out each year is fraud. That's nowhere near Elon Musk's pledge to cut \$2 trillion from the federal budget, but it is certainly not couch change.

Having access to Treasury's payments system isn't where Musk would go if he truly wants to make progress on waste, fraud and abuse. Here's why:

First, legally, it isn't the Bureau of the Fiscal Service's mandate to decide who is eligible for tax credits or which Social Security beneficiaries are worthy recipients of payments. The bureau does conduct a systemwide check against a “do not pay” list, to make sure it is not paying out to people who are perhaps deceased or members of known terrorist organizations.

But it is not their role to probe, for example, rampant fraud in the covid-19-era employee retention tax credit, and then decide which businesses look to be worthy recipients of the credit. That is a job for the Internal Revenue Service, which administers the program. The Bureau of the Fiscal Service just cuts the checks.

That's how it should be. The bureau has no way of identifying fraud across every program in the federal government. That's more



than \$5 trillion of payments each year, and more than 1 billion individual payments.

Being able to tell a fraudulent payment from a valid one requires information about the programs and the households and businesses getting the funds, and all of that information sits in the agencies, not in the payments system. That's part of why I am disheartened to see the Trump administration and Musk push to "delete" the IRS or dismantle the Education Department. These changes will lead to more government fraud, not less.

There are likely many ways the systems at the Bureau of the Fiscal Service could be run more efficiently. I spent two years with colleagues at the IRS, in part, working on upgrading its IT infrastructure, which dates in meaningful ways to the 1950s. I learned that government IT is a labyrinth of complexity and often out of date relative to private sector advances. My ardent hope was that Musk would be able to bring his substantial private-sector expertise and recruit skilled professionals who can help make government work better.

In recent days, Bessent has tried to make the case to lawmakers that is what Musk and DOGE teams' access to the payments system will accomplish. He says they have been given something called "read-only" access to make recommendations about improving government operations without the ability to actually stop or redirect particular payments, though some reporting has questioned that claim.

Be wary. Just a week ago, it would have been unimaginable for DOGE—or any Trump political appointees—to have access to this sensitive data and fragile payments infrastructure. It is natural to worry about the potential threats to data privacy, cybersecurity and the stability of the federal government that are ahead. There is no legitimate reason for them to have this access.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, it is being reported that Elon Musk has sent his creepy minions to illegally install a private server that is stealing people's information. They are using it to skirt laws about sensitive and possibly even classified information, giving them access to people's Social Security numbers, home addresses, and more.

What is happening is a crime, plain and simple. It is a crime. It violates the Privacy Act of 1974, the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, as well as provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.

Elon says it is a crime to expose who he has put in charge of the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I say to Elon that it is a crime to hide that from the American people. I, for one, am not going to stand by while he gets his grubby little billionaire hands all over our parents' and grandparents' Social Security checks. He better believe that he is going to be held accountable for all of this.

The truth is coming out. He is stealing from the American people, and we are not going to let him do it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I offer the gentleman from Massachusetts an opportunity for whatever comments he has remaining.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to the time remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to close yet, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman brought up some pardons. A few minutes ago, I talked about how Trump pardoned a drug trafficker who let fentanyl pour into our country. Let's not forget he also pardoned over 1,000 people who beat cops and tried to kill them on January 6.

The last time I was on the floor, I went through some of the worst offenders he pardoned. Since then, we have learned even more about these convicted felons, these violent criminals, who are now roaming free in our communities thanks to Donald Trump and the Republicans.

Matthew Huttie is a man with 12 prior criminal convictions, including a shocking case where he pled guilty to brutally hitting his 3-year-old son, leaving bruises all over the child's backside and neck. After he was pardoned by Trump, Huttie went back to Indiana where he was killed during a violent confrontation with law enforcement. Huttie was a child abuser with a history of violence who put law enforcement in danger again after he was pardoned by Donald Trump.

Theodore Middendorf, accused of sexually assaulting a 7-year-old child, pled guilty to this horrific crime in 2024 and was sentenced to 19 years in prison, but that wasn't all. He also pled guilty to destroying government property using a flagpole as a weapon during the Capitol riot, and for that he was pardoned by Donald Trump.

□ 1315

Peter Schwartz is a man with 30 prior criminal convictions, including assaulting his wife, biting her and repeatedly punching her. The same man attacked police officers on January 6 with pepper spray. He is a repeat offender pardoned by Donald Trump.

Andrew Taake was arrested in 2016 for soliciting a minor online for sex, but his criminal history didn't stop there. He assaulted police officers with bear spray and a metal whip on January 6. He is another repeat offender pardoned by Donald Trump.

Kasey Hopkins has a criminal history so disturbing, it is hard to stomach. In 2002, he was convicted of forcible rape, where he choked his victim to the point of impairing her vision. This is the same man who has prior convictions for assaulting law enforcement and possessing controlled substances. He was here on January 6, and he was pardoned by Donald Trump.

David Daniel is facing charges for producing and possessing child pornography, disturbingly involving two young girls in his own family. Police

officers found evidence of child sexual abuse while they searched his home in connection with his arrest for assaulting police officers on January 6. He may have his sexual charges thrown out thanks to the fact that he was pardoned by Donald Trump.

Because of Donald Trump and the Republicans, we have child sex predators, domestic abusers, and violent criminals unleashed back onto our streets. I have to ask, how many American parents are sleeping easier tonight knowing these criminals are out there walking free thanks to Donald Trump? This is stomach churning.

It doesn't even stop there. We also have January 6 perpetrators who have been rearrested—yes, rearrested—on new charges even after being pardoned.

Daniel Ball, a convicted felon because of his involvement in the Capitol insurrection, was pardoned by Donald Trump on January 20 only to be rearrested 2 days later on gun charges.

Now, Trump is going after the law enforcement officers who helped put these criminals away.

America, your President is purging the police of anyone not loyal to him. Think about that. Let that sink in because these are the actions of a fascist.

More than half a dozen senior FBI executives have been ordered to retire or be fired by Monday. The Acting Director of the FBI said that the list of names of those involved in the Capitol riot investigations could number in the thousands.

How many police officers will Trump fire? How does any of this make any of us more safe?

My colleagues need to wake up. I mean, purging the police of anyone who goes after criminals, we know how this ends. We know what the message this sends is. Trump is telling America that violence is fine as long as his people do it.

Republicans are releasing violent child predators, domestic abusers, and sexual offenders back into our communities and, at the same time, investigating and firing the real law enforcement officers, the heroes who are actually upholding the rule of law.

Guess what. I won't be complicit. They are about to run into a massive wall of resistance, and that wall is us.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and also to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I have so much more I want to say, but this all really boils down to one question: Whose side are you on, Mr. Speaker? Whose side are you on?

Are you on the side of the American people or the billionaires who are stealing from them?

Are you on the side of law enforcement or the guy who pardoned the drug dealer who let in all the fentanyl?

Are you on the side of workers or the robber barons who want to fleece people out of their paychecks and rob them of their hard-earned benefits?

Are you on the side of the American taxpayers or Elon Musk, a nepo baby who sucks up government subsidies and uses tax money to enrich himself while spreading hate and lies on his broken website?

Democrats know what side we are on. We are on the side of the people. We are going to continue to show up, and we are going to continue to fight back.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everybody to vote “no” on this rule, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I just have to say that I am appalled. I understand they get the right to say whatever they want to during this time of debate on the rule for the HALT Fentanyl Act. I understand that, but they say you have to choose what side you are on, then bring up Elon Musk, and then say vote “no.” This bill has nothing to do with Elon Musk. This bill is about fentanyl-related substances and fentanyl analogues. It perplexes me, other than it is an attempt to confuse everybody on what this bill is about.

If they want to make all those statements, they can, but I would think they would be in favor of getting this bill done. If you are going to choose to say whose side you are on with this bill, you are making a choice. You are making a choice. We have an opportunity today, right here and now, to pass a rule and then tomorrow to pass a bill that will make a step forward in stopping the cartels, the Chinese precursors, and the folks who are doing the bad things in our country and in other countries from bringing their substances into this country and trying to use a gimmick, a chemical technique, saying that it is not really fentanyl, that it is a fentanyl analogue, and get around our laws.

That is what this bill is about. Every Member ought to be in favor of that. Why you wouldn't be in favor of at least bringing that bill to the floor and having a vote on it is beyond me. If we are choosing sides, I am going to choose to take a step forward. I am going to take a step forward to try to stop this scourge of fentanyl poisoning, fentanyl analogue poisoning, and fentanyl-related substances coming into our country. That is the side I am going to choose.

I understand they want to talk about all kinds of other things. I think it is a pretty darn good bill, and I think we should pass it.

Now, let me get to my script. I would like to reiterate the importance of the bill to permanently schedule fentanyl analogues as schedule I while still allowing for research into these substances.

This is one small step in fighting the opioid crisis our country faces. If we allow this temporary extension to expire in March—as it will if we take no action, if we choose the wrong side today and tomorrow—it will bring back the incentives for traffickers to bring these fentanyl analogues and fentanyl-related substances into our country.

I truly don't believe my colleagues on the other side want that. I understand they get fired up on the floor sometimes and say things that maybe later, in retrospect, they think maybe they shouldn't have gone that far.

If we are going to choose sides, I urge everybody to pass the rule and choose the side of stopping the fentanyl scourge in our country, the fentanyl analogue scourge in our country, and urge the passage of this rule and for final passage of the underlying bill.

The material previously referred to by Mr. MCGOVERN is as follows:

AN AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 93 OFFERED BY  
MR. MCGOVERN OF MASSACHUSETTS

Strike all after the resolved clause and insert the following:

That immediately upon adoption of this resolution, the House shall proceed to the consideration in the House of the bill consisting of the text of H.R. 4531 of the 118th Congress, as passed by the House, to reauthorize certain programs that provide for opioid use disorder prevention, recovery, and treatment, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and on any amendment thereto, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce or their respective designees; and (2) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 2. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 4531.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

#### EMERGENCY WILDFIRE FIGHTING TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 2025

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 836) to require the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service, and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an evaluation with respect to the use of the container aerial firefighting system (CAFFS), and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 836

*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 “Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2025”.

#### SEC. 2. CONTAINER AERIAL FIREFIGHTING SYSTEM (CAFFS).

(a) EVALUATION.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board, shall jointly conduct an evaluation of the container aerial firefighting system to assess the use of such system to mitigate and suppress wildfires.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board, shall jointly submit to the appropriate committees a report that includes the results of the evaluation required under subsection (a).

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate committees” means—

(1) the Committees on Agriculture and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 836, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of Congressman VALADAO's bill, the Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2025. This timely legislation offers us a chance to equip land managers with another tool in their arsenal to combat the catastrophic wildfire crisis by testing a new and innovative method for wildfire suppression.