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March 13, 2025

Wyden Opposes Faulkender Nomination, Slams Trump Weaponization of IRS

As Prepared for Delivery

Before we get to the business at hand, I need to address what is happening down the street. Donald Trump and Elon Musk are intent on violating taxpayer privacy laws and weaponizing the IRS against American taxpayers. It's as simple as that.

They've now forced out the nonpartisan officials in the only two Senate-confirmed positions at the IRS -- commissioner and chief counsel. Yesterday they installed someone as chief counsel who appears willing to help them break laws that were designed specifically to prevent somebody like Trump from committing this abuse of power. This is guaranteed to end with Trump and Musk driving innocent taxpayers into misery. And that's setting aside the hardship they're going to inflict on taxpayers by decimating taxpayer service, and the debt spiral they're risking by destroying tax enforcement among corporations and the rich.

Now, onto my opposition to the Faulkender nomination.

First of all, for somebody who's a veteran of the first Trump administration and who's been working in the Treasury building since January 21st, Dr. Faulkender did a whole lot of dodging and weaving when it came to the damage Trump and Musk are doing.

He dodged questions on the DOGE infiltration of the Treasury Department, despite the Treasury's admission that DOGE showed up with the intent to illegally impound funds appropriated by the Congress.

He dodged questions about rumored plans to slash the IRS workforce and gut billionaire tax enforcement, despite the fact that he's already serving unofficially in a role that directly oversees the IRS.

I asked him directly whether the president has the authority to impound funds -- a clear violation of Congress' Article I authority over federal spending. His answer was, "I do not know the legal authority of the president when it comes to impoundment." But during a television interview last year, he said he

supported impoundment and talked about how the president should use it to trample over Congressional appropriations and our constitutional authority. Dr. Faulkender didn't give many forthcoming answers. That means he spent his hearing covering up for nearly two months of reckless and anti-constitutional behavior from the Trump administration.

But it wasn't all ducking and dodging from Dr. Faulkender.

Even though the Treasury Department has no role in overseeing our bedrock health care programs, Dr. Faulkender went out of his way to defend the Republican plans to slash Medicaid and kick tens of millions of Americans off their health care. This came in response to strong questioning from Senator Warnock, who asked, "Do you think that it's a good idea to take families off of Medicaid?" Dr. Faulkender answered with the same old Republican spin about, "self-sufficiency and getting off of government dependency."

Colleagues, Medicaid covers 38 million kids in America, including half of all kids with special health needs. Medicaid pays for half of all nursing home beds. It's an essential source of health coverage for people with disabilities and a lifeline for rural hospitals and doctors. The Republican lingo we heard from Dr. Faulkender simply papers over the fact that if Republicans follow through with gutting Medicaid, rural communities will become health care deserts, and a lot of kids, seniors and people with disabilities will be driven into misery. Many of them will die as a result.

The reality is, if he's confirmed, Dr. Faulkender is going to be right in the middle of that agenda. It's all about paying for more handouts to billionaires and corporations.

I cannot support a nominee who's already dirtied his hands on that work. I will oppose this nomination and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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