

CNN's *The Lead with Jake Tapper*

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JAKE TAPPER: In our Politics Lead, the House Oversight Committee Democrats are calling the Republicans' investigation into President Biden's autopen usage a sham after the Republican-led committee alleged in its report that there was a cover-up of Biden's cognitive decline and sent a letter to the Justice Department saying that legal consequences are warranted. Ranking Democrat on the committee, Robert Garcia, says, aides testified that Biden "fully executed his duties" and authorized every executive order pardon and use of the autopen. Let's bring in Democratic Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury, who sits on the committee. Congresswoman, the conclusion of this 93-page report hinges on the lack of written approval traceable to the President's own consent when it comes to these pardons and highlight staffers confusion about the paper flow. Democrats drew their own conclusions. What evidence are you pointing to that refutes this report?

CONGRESSWOMAN MELANIE STANSBURY (D-NM): Well, Jake, thank you so much for having me on. I have to say that I am deeply disturbed that this is a lead story on national network television tonight, as we are four days away from 42 million Americans losing food assistance as literally the White House is building a \$300 million ballroom, and they are choosing to cut off food assistance and SNAP to 42 million Americans. They are going to let seniors, children, veterans, and millions of Americans starve, and this is what we're covering? So, let me just say this. The bizarre obsession that House Republicans have with Biden is exactly that. He is not even president right now. Donald Trump is President. He is literally overseas. He is not trying to reopen the government. He is not trying to feed the American people. He is not trying to deal with the healthcare crisis, and he literally was being led around a ballroom by the Japanese prime minister last night in the apparent confusion that he himself is unable to perform the duties as the duly elected President. So, I have to say, I'm disturbed to hear that this is even a story as most of our country is literally in crisis right now.

TAPPER: So, I actually do have questions for you about the cuts to the SNAP program and the fact that 42 million Americans will not have food stamp coverage as of Saturday, and we covered it yesterday and I covered it earlier today, and we're going to cover it tomorrow as well, but this is a report from the House Oversight Committee, the majority — and I talked to the chairman of the committee who suggested that more legislation would be needed to outline exactly who a president should be able to grant a pardon to. Is that something that you think both parties could agree upon?

STANSBURY: Well, I think first of all, the House needs to come back in session. Mike Johnson has now canceled the House of Representatives for 39 straight days. We are in day 28 of a House shutdown. They are literally not here. The President is overseas, as I just said, and they're about to cut off food assistance to millions of Americans. And so I think it's bizarre that Chairman Comer is going on T.V. talking about an investigation into a former president who's not even a sitting president over a non-issue while literally Americans are about to starve.

TAPPER: So, the reason that SNAP is running out of funding, I understand there's a disagreement about the contingency plan, and whether that —

STANSBURY: It's not a disagreement. Literally, Congress approved money for this scenario. The White House is choosing to let Americans go without —

TAPPER: Well, the Agriculture Department argues that the contingency funds \$6 billion is there for natural disaster. I know that that's disputed. But if you are so concerned about SNAP funds running out, why not ask Democrats in the Senate to vote to open up the government and then the SNAP funding would go? I mean, that's — I understand the dispute about the contingency fund, and that's a real dispute and that's \$6 billion that could fund the SNAP program for two to three more weeks. But if we're actually talking about long-term, why not have Senate Democrats to vote to open up the government?

STANSBURY: — well, so, first of all, I filed legislation in the House of Representatives today, even though Mike Johnson has shut down the House, there are pro forma sessions happening on the House floor, and today, I filed the SNAP-backed legislation that would force the administration to release those funds to not cut off EBT cards to millions of Americans, and that would reimburse states and tribes. So, I'm doing my part here in the House. But I cannot vote for a bill until it comes to the House and Mike Johnson has shut down the House and the President is nowhere to be found. Now I'm a former OMB official, and I can tell you that OMB is breaking the law right now. Congress has appropriated the dollars and state attorney generals have filed suit today in federal court to compel the administration to release those funds because they are breaking the law. And we know that they know that they're breaking the law because just a couple of weeks ago, they move funds into WIC to save WIC, but they think that they can use the hunger of children to try to leverage Democrats rather than feeding 42 million Americans. And we're not going to stand for it. We're going to sue them. We're going to use the courts, we're going to use Congress, and we're going to do everything we can at the community level to make sure that Americans can put food on the table this weekend —

TAPPER: Should — should the Democrats —

STANSBURY: — and we're not going to stand for this.

TAPPER: — should the Democratic senators from New Mexico, your home state, vote to open the government so that these SNAP funds are not at risk?

STANSBURY: Let me be clear, the administration is choosing to starve American children with money that they already have appropriated.

TAPPER: I'm not —

STANSBURY: This is the choice by the White House.

TAPPER: — I'm applauding their tactics.

STANSBURY: This is a choice by the White House.

TAPPER: This is also — Congresswoman —

STANSBURY: They are choosing to cut out food assistance.

TAPPER: — this is also a choice by Senate Democrats —

STANSBURY: No, it is not.

TAPPER: — to not vote to open the government. Yes, it is.

STANSBURY: The Senate —

TAPPER: I understand why they're doing it. They're doing it because they want Medicaid funds restored. They're doing it because they want Obamacare premiums to be extended past the end of the year. I understand the reasoning.

STANSBURY: — sir, let me just be clear, the money for contingency plans is sitting there. That is why the states are suing. The White House is withholding funds from children —

TAPPER: Yes, it's two to three weeks worth of SNAP funds, yes.

STANSBURY: Yeah. Well, it may not be a big deal to you, but —

TAPPER: It is a big deal to me.

STANSBURY: — let me tell you that for the grandparents —

TAPPER: It is a big deal to me.

STANSBURY: — for grandparents that literally are feeding their children.

TAPPER: My point is that it's a short-term solution.

STANSBURY: And not have money in those accounts —

TAPPER: It's a short-term —

STANSBURY: — it doesn't matter. At the end of the day, people need to be able to feed their families, and Saturday is when those funds run out.

TAPPER: If you feel so strongly —

STANSBURY: And we are fighting —

TAPPER: — Congresswoman, why not ask —

STANSBURY: — to get that funding.

TAPPER: — funding the Senate Democrats from New Mexico to vote to open the government so that the SNAP funds —

STANSBURY: Sir, I am here in the House of Representatives. It is shut down. I am fighting to get the government reopened. I am fighting to get funding, put back into SNAP that is already existent and I am fighting for the American people. I am here. But show me a single Republican that is here. Not a single one is here to make sure that Americans are fed on Saturday. That is why I am here.

TAPPER: Democratic Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury from New Mexico, thanks so much. I appreciate it.