

CBS Mornings

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7 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Congressman Tom Emmer]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Ahead, can Congress reach a deal on ICE reforms? We are talking to GOP Congressman Tom Emmer. That's coming up next!

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7:30:47 a.m.

7 minutes and 11 seconds

DUTHIERS: In Washington this morning, Congress appears to be in no hurry to end the latest partial government shutdown. After the sweeping crackdown by federal agents in Minneapolis, Democrats are demanding major changes before they agree to more Homeland Security spending. Border czar, Tom Homan says he doesn't like officers to wear masks, but they have to protect themselves. With us now is Minnesota Congressman Tom Emmer. He is the third highest-ranking Republican in the House of Representatives. Good morning, sir. Good to see you.

HOUSE MAJORITY WHIP TOM EMMER (R-MN): Good to see you, Vlad.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Rep. Tom Emmer On ICE Reform & Partial Shutdown]

DUTHIERS: So, let me ask you about that. Democrats are asking for ICE agents to show I.D.s, to wear body cameras and stop wearing masks, among other reforms. What are Republicans willing to compromise on?

EMMER: Well, I think the compromise was already in the bill that passed the House, but let's go back to that just for a second. Now they want ICE law enforcement agents to show IDs, but they don't think people should show an ID to vote. There's some type of intellectual disconnect. The reforms in the bill that we passed are already there. For instance, Vlad, you've heard them say, we want body cameras now. Republicans and Democrats all agreed on this, and in the bill that passed the House, the money was in there for bodycams. The one no-go and we will not do anything on the Republican side that would inhibit law enforcement's ability to do their job.

DUTHIERS: But Congressman, when they're asking for IDs they don't mean identification in the way that we as ordinary Americans carry them. They mean similar to a badge number that a police officer would have, not wearing a mask, because there is no way to know an officer who is arresting you who they are, just if they are showing a face. Our police officers on the streets don't wear masks.

EMMER: Yeah, Vlad, you can interpret it that way for sure, but that isn't necessarily what

they're asking for. If you listen closely, I don't know that they know exactly what they're asking for, because what has happened is Republicans and Democrats had an agreement, worked very hard together, passed a bipartisan Homeland Security funding bill out of the House. Then the tragedy occurred in Minneapolis, and now they want to argue about reforms that, frankly, are already in the bill, many of them.

DUTHIERS: So do you know what was in the White House's proposal that the Democrats have rejected? And are you part of the meetings to work through this with the Democrats? Is The White House telling you what is in the bill?

EMMER: Vlad, the House did our job. We have an agreement. My position is the Senate should pass the bill that we already passed. The federal law enforcement issue involving Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, they are already funded based on the bill that was signed into law last July through 2029. All the Democrats are doing right now is trying to shut down TSA, the Coast Guard, FEMA, disaster relief.

DUTHIERS: Are you talking to them? It sounds like you're not talking to them?

EMMER: Are — the White House?

DUTHIERS: To the Democrats.

EMMER: The President is the chief negotiator and is working directly with Senate Democrats.

DUTHIERS: So, you're not talking to Democrats.

EMMER: We've done our job, Vlad.

DUTHIERS: Okay.

EMMER: I mean, that would suggest that there's more to do on the House side. Again, this was an agreement between Democrats and Republicans on the House side that the Senate Democrats decided they were not going to honor.

DUTHIERS: Right.

EMMER: So, that's an issue that the President and the Senate Democrats have been negotiating.

DUTHIERS: Let me ask you about these Epstein files. The Attorney General, Pam Bondi and the Justice Department, say all Epstein files have now been released as required by law, a law that you helped whip passed last year. Are you satisfied with that? And do you think that enough has been done by the Justice Department?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Rep. Tom Emmer on Release of Epstein Files]

EMMER: Well, I find it interesting, Vlad, that we never talked about this before this administration. Donald Trump, in his first administration is the one — his administration is the one that arrested Jeffrey Epstein and the accomplice, Ghislaine.

DUTHIERS: Ghislaine.

EMMER: — Ghislaine, sorry, that's Midwestern faux pas. Now, we go through four years of a Biden administration when nobody seems to care and then you come to this time —

DUTHIERS: Representative Ro Khanna, who's a Democrat, has said that he wishes that Democrats had been more on the record —

EMMER: Well, that's —

DUTHIERS: But, but, but wait — the public does still have questions.

EMMER: — well, if you let me finish on this, so if this is the only administration that has been pushing to release it all, this is the ultimate transparency. All of these documents that have been put out, I think millions of documents the DOJ has been doing their best job to make sure that victims are protected, while at the same time, the American public have access to everything that's in those. I think everybody agrees, regardless of your political persuasion, that Jeffrey Epstein was an awful human being and that these victims deserve to be — they need to be verified.

DUTHIERS: So your Republican colleague, as you know, Thomas Massie, yesterday, he called the Epstein administration — he called the Trump administration the Epstein administration, as a senior member of the House, I mean, are you urging there to be more investigations into people whose names were protected in those redactions?

EMMER: Vlad, I don't know exactly where Thomas is going with this. I know that there's a personal issue that Thomas and the President have. But what I would say is —

DUTHIERS: What exactly is the issue?

EMMER: — well, they have some differences. What I would say on the Epstein issue with Thomas, if he's got something specific, then absolutely bring it to the DOJ and it would be Thomas or anyone else. If there is a crime that they believe is not being investigated properly, bring it to the DOJ and I have no doubt in my mind that they will take it on.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Rep. Tom Emmer on Trump's Election Comments]

DUTHIERS: All right, we've got about a minute left. Let me just ask you two more questions. The President has spoken about elections being nationalized, meaning moving control of elections from the states to the federal government. Do you think that that is a constitutional policy? And where do you stand on that?

EMMER: We have a state-based election system. It is going to remain that way. This was Nancy Pelosi's number one thing a few years ago was to make our elections all national. I think what we're talking about is making sure that the integrity of the process, especially —

DUTHIERS: But I don't think that's what the President is saying.

EMMER: Vlad, especially for — the President will do his words. I'll tell you where I'm at. The federal elections are administered by our states. We want to make sure that those federal elections are — the integrity of those elections is protected, and I'll just use my state. The federal government, the Department of Justice has asked Minnesota for all the voting records over the last several elections. If you have nothing to hide, then you would send those to the federal government. Instead, they refuse to provide it.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Rep. Tom Emmer on *CBS Mornings*]

DUTHIERS: Last question, you and I were talking backstage a little before we came on the air, the President's claims, the false claims about fraud in America, the tragic deaths of two Americans at the hands of federal agents, the questions about using the Justice Department for personal retaliation. We were talking about, is there a point where you can see this country coming together again the way that perhaps we were? Do you feel that the general public is losing faith in our government institutions?

EMMER: Vlad, this country will always come out of things and be even stronger than it was before. We've gone through things throughout our history. I think you were pointing out to me all the different things that we've gone through in this country, whether it's the Civil War, whether it's the incident at Kent University, whether it's the 60s, when there was all kinds of disruption. We are going to be fine at the end of the day. This is how a Republic, a free people — actually, it is not a pretty process sometimes, but this is how we come to a place where we understand. We are all fortunate to be living in the greatest country the world has ever seen, and we should all be allowed to chase our version of the American Dream or the best of ourselves.

DUTHIERS: Congressman Tom Emmer, thank you for coming in. Appreciate it, sir