

They did an exhaustive study. What they found is that, unfortunately, we did not have enough security at that outpost. It was not an embassy, but it was definitely an outpost.

There is a lot of talk going on about how could this happen—e-mails and all the rest. Let me focus on something very important. It takes funding to protect an embassy. It takes funding to protect a consulate. It takes funding to protect an outpost. Yes, it takes funding. Who cut the funds from embassy security? The Republicans in the House, that is who—hundreds of millions of dollars. If it were not for the Democrats, it would have been cut more, because when it came here, we stood our ground. We had to accommodate their cuts. That is how the process works. So I think the Benghazi “scandal” starts with the Republicans looking in the mirror. Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of them all? They ought to ask: Mirror, mirror, who cut the funding for diplomatic security across this world for America? The answer: Republicans.

They cannot stand the heat so they turn it on Secretary Clinton, and that is completely wrong. I believe if we want to know what happened in Benghazi, it starts with the fact that there was not enough security. There was not enough security because the budget was cut. Secretary Clinton said that she, in hindsight, should have definitely fought against it even harder than she did. But let the record show she predicted problems. When she saw the cuts—I don’t have the exact quote in front of me but to paraphrase—she said there are going to be problems here. This budget is cut too much. And she was right.

What about these talking points? I do not know if the Presiding Officer sits down with her staff to discuss how she is going to phrase something. I don’t know whether the Presiding Officer does that or whether she just does it by herself. What I do or what most people do is they have a collaborative process. When we are trying to put out a press release with a whole number of agencies having to sign off on it, it is a collaborative process. At the end of the day, one statement was approved. The statement that was made by Susan Rice, her paraphrasing of the statement was: It looks like this started because of this protest, but we don’t know for sure. We don’t know and as soon as we know we will say.

The day of or the day after what happened in Benghazi, the President of these United States, President Obama, stood and said this was a terror attack.

Why are the Republicans playing politics with this? It is pretty clear. Their attack coincides with the Karl Rove ad against Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. They are going after her. Why? Because they are looking to the 2016 Presidential election.

I have to say, keep politics out of the IRS, keep politics out of Benghazi. Don’t take four beautiful Americans

who died in a tragic fashion and play politics, 2016 politics, with it. It is an outrage.

So I say they should start off by looking in the mirror, stepping to the plate, admitting that they cut too much from embassy security. If they want to hold a hearing on it, fine. If they want a hearing, they need to call the people to the table who can help us make sure this never happens again.

I will continue to speak out on Benghazi, and I will continue to speak out on whatever issues my Republican friends are pounding on. At the end of the day, the bottom line is, Who cut the money for embassy security?

If they want to divert attention from that, be my guest, but I will bring it home. Everyone knows if we had adequate security there, it could have well been a different outcome.

WRDA

If there are any Senators who have amendments, please come down to the Senate floor. Let’s get this done. We hope to get this agreed to in a timely manner. Let’s get to the amendments. There is a whole list of bipartisan amendments we believe have been cleared. Let’s get this bill done.

The rating we have been given from the engineers is a D-plus for our infrastructure. We need to deepen our ports and there needs to be more flex control. We need to invest in water infrastructure as well as restore our wetlands. We have a lot of work to do.

We are entering into a period of time now where there is more and more extreme weather—weather we have never seen before. We need to make those investments to prevent the worst from happening. We saw what Superstorm Sandy, that one event cost: \$60 billion. How does it make sense to pay after the fact? We need to invest.

This bill has a lot of important reforms. People know we need to fix our infrastructure. We need to fix our roads, bridges, and water infrastructure. It has to be done. This bill will support 550,000 jobs, and Lord knows, people need that as well.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ABUSES OF POWER

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise to speak out against the alarming reports that have recently surfaced by the IRS and the Department of Justice.

As the Federal agency tasked with administering the U.S. Tax Code, the IRS has an extraordinary influence on the lives of all Americans, from all walks of life and all points of view. As

citizens we have the absolute right to expect the IRS to be free from political influence, with taxpayers treated fairly and enforcement carried out in an unbiased manner. Unfortunately, in recent days we have learned our expectations are far adrift from reality.

Last week the Internal Revenue Service acknowledged a history of targeting conservative politically active groups during their process of seeking tax-exempt status. This practice first involved flagging groups concerned about government spending and debt. Ironically, such targeting comes at a time when poll after poll indicates the Federal Government’s out-of-control spending and our \$17 trillion debt are top concerns for all Americans. I can tell my colleagues from my experience it is the top concern for Nebraskans.

Despite these legitimate concerns and the patriotic desire of Americans to effect change in government, the IRS worked to impede these organizations with one of the bluntest instruments of government: regulatory abuse. The IRS demanded inordinate amounts of documents from these groups, including donor lists, which served to unfairly delay the tax-exempt certification of these well-intentioned groups.

This news is alarming on multiple fronts. First and foremost, it is unacceptable that the IRS would blatantly target any of our fellow citizens, let alone groups of Americans whose views are at odds with their own. As the Washington Post noted in today’s lead editorial: “Any unequal application of the law based on ideological viewpoint is unpardonable—toxic to the legitimacy of the government’s vast law enforcement authority.” I couldn’t agree more.

These activist groups were simply trying to exercise their First Amendment rights of peaceable assembly and free speech—the cornerstone of our democracy. Yet their reward for expressing concern about the direction our country is going was to be singled out in an attempt to prevent them from fully engaging in the democratic process.

It has been reported that the targeting of these Americans—and muffling of their voices on the pressing issues facing our country—began in 2010. What has happened since then? The passage of very consequential pieces of legislation, including ObamaCare and the Dodd-Frank Financial Reform Act, multiple debates on how to address our Nation’s dire fiscal situation, two national elections, including last fall’s Presidential election.

As alarming as the actions of the IRS are, I am even more troubled by the IRS trying to hide these actions. When an IRS official last week finally acknowledged and apologized for the targeting of conservative groups, it was more than 3 years after the practice is said to have begun. It was more than 1 year after the current Acting IRS Commissioner, Steven Miller, is reported to

have become aware of the targeting, but it doesn't stop with Mr. Miller.

As the Washington Post noted: "Lois Lerner, the head of the IRS's tax-exempt organization office, knew about the targeting in 2011; she seemed to say Friday that she learned about it from news reports last year."

These were not the malicious actions of a rogue agent or simply another example of government incompetence; instead, this was a clear, methodical abuse of government power to discriminate against whole groups of Americans simply because of their political beliefs.

Despite their awareness of abuse, officials from the IRS failed time after time to disclose this targeting and little effort was made to end the practice. Even as recently as their admissions on Friday, the IRS continued to engage in coverups and half-truths. In fact, IRS officials seem to go out of their way to deny wrongdoing.

In testimony last year before the House of Representatives, then-IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman said there was "absolutely no targeting."

After years of neglecting to inform Congress of this practice, the long overdue admission was the result of diligent lawmakers exercising oversight along with a soon-to-be released report from the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.

The time for muted outrage and limp apologies has passed. The American people deserve nothing less than absolute assurance that this practice will not happen again. Those who are responsible must be held accountable and removed from their positions. The policies that enabled this gross abuse of power must be changed immediately.

It is also worth noting the IRS is one of the lead Federal agencies in charge of implementing ObamaCare. It does not appear the IRS is in any condition to implement this highly controversial law, particularly as public trust in this agency continues to plummet.

Just yesterday we learned of another breach of public trust and another potential violation of our First Amendment freedom—the freedom of the press. Press reports indicate the Department of Justice secretly obtained extensive telephone records of reporters and editors for the Associated Press in what the head of the news organization called a "massive and unprecedented intrusion" into how news organizations gather the news. According to the Associated Press's legal counsel, the records obtained included those from reporters working out of the House of Representatives press gallery.

While it is unclear at this point how many reporters were targeted and why, the effect of this data gathering is clear: intimidation of the press and suppression of free speech.

This is unacceptable. A free and unfettered press is vital to any democracy. Moreover, the scope of this information gathering is simply beyond the pale—and likely beyond precedent.

The Attorney General and the President owe the American people answers, and they owe them now. These recent abuses of power by both the IRS and the Department of Justice are just the latest episodes of this executive branch's disturbing pattern of overstepping its lawful powers.

We have seen this in the President's unconstitutional recess appointments. We have seen this in the EPA's disclosure of classified information of cattlemen to activist environmental groups. We have seen this in a lack of forthrightness with our government's response to the attacks on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi.

The result of this methodical government overreach has a powerful chilling effect on citizens. There is no place for that in a democracy. There is no place for that in the United States. The American people deserve a government that jealously guards the liberties of its citizens, not a government that tramples on our basic constitutional rights.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, in the interest of all Senators, and frankly in the interest of the people of this country, we are moving forward on the Water Resources Development Act. The question is, will we be able to clear a list of amendments, some by voice vote, and a further list of more controversial amendments by recorded vote. I am hoping that is the case. Senator VITTER and I hope that is the case, that we can get clearance on these packages of amendments. If we do not, we have to decide whether to invoke cloture, which will bring debate to a close. If we have to go that way, we have to go that way. But I am very optimistic that we can get these amendments cleared because, frankly, almost every Senator here has a stake in this very important legislation.

We have ports that are sometimes on the coast, sometimes they are inland. We have waterways. We have floods in our States. Not all of us but most of us. We have environmental restorations in our States with wetland conservation. We have work to do on our water infrastructure. Our infrastructure in this country has been rated a D-plus. That is not very heartening for the greatest country in the world. We have a weak infrastructure. Frankly, that is not good enough.

I want to read a list of supporters for our legislation. I think what people

will notice is how broad-based the list is. They are either representing workers or businesses, or they are businesses themselves. They are businesses that need to ship products. So let me read this. There are environmental organizations.

The AFL-CIO supports us; the American Association of Port Authorities; the American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association; the American Council of Engineering Companies; the American Farm Bureau Federation; the American Foundry Society; the American Public Works Association; the American Road and Transportation Builders; the American Society of Civil Engineers; the American Soybean Association; Associated Equipment Distributors; Associated General Contractors; Association of Equipment Manufacturers; the Clean Water Construction Coalition; the Concrete Reinforced Steel Institute.

I can't even go through it all, it is such a very long list. There is the National Association of Flood and Storm Management Agencies, the National Governors Association, the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, the National Waterways Conference, Inc., the American Institute of Architects, the National Association of Manufacturers, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. There are more. It is such a long list.

I ask unanimous consent to place this list into the RECORD.

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

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING S.601

AFL-CIO, American Association of Port Authorities, American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association, American Council of Engineering Companies, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Foundry Society, American Public Works Association, American Road and Transportation Builders Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Soybean Association, Associated Equipment Distributors, Associated General Contractors of America, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, Clean Water Construction Coalition, Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute.

Construction Management Association of America, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, International Liquid Terminals Association, International Propeller Club of the United States, International Union of Operating Engineers, Laborers International Union of North America, Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS), NAIOP, The Commercial Real Estate Development Association, National Association of Flood and Storm Management Agencies, National Governors Association, National Grain and Feed Association, National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, National Retail Federation, National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS), National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, National Waterways Conference, Inc.

Plumbing Manufacturers International, Portland Cement Association, The American Institute of Architects, The Fertilizer Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Transportation Construction Coalition, U.S. Chamber