

best interests were thrown to the way-side.

In a recent report from Politico mentioned by some of my colleagues already, we have learned that the Obama administration allegedly blocked efforts by U.S. law enforcement officials to fight Hezbollah's transnational drug and weapons trafficking operations.

Hezbollah, Iran's terrorist proxy organization, has also become one of the world's most powerful and dangerous criminal organizations, receiving over \$1 billion every year from their illicit activities. We have learned that, through an expansive criminal trafficking network, they funnel cocaine throughout the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the United States.

It has also come to light that Hezbollah launders millions of dollars through schemes involving used car purchases in the United States, and, ultimately, the money earned through these activities can be used for violent terrorist activities aimed at spreading fear and pain throughout the world.

Politico quoted the following from a confidential DEA report on Hezbollah's criminal activities: Hezbollah "has leveraged relationships with corrupt foreign government officials and transnational criminal actors . . . creating a network that can be utilized to move metric ton quantities of cocaine, launder drug proceeds on a global scale, and procure weapons and precursors for explosives."

It "has at its disposal one of the most capable networks of actors coalescing elements of transnational organized crime with terrorism in the world."

The DEA's acting deputy administrator in 2016 stated that Hezbollah's criminal operations "provide a revenue and weapons stream for an international terrorist organization responsible for devastating terror attacks around the world."

Certainly, an organization like that deserves America's utmost scrutiny; and for years, the men and women of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Project Cassandra poured their lives into investigating Hezbollah's criminal activities. These agents tracked financial transactions, cultivated sources, and trailed operatives. But, in several cases, when the DEA asked for prosecutions, arrests, or sanctions, President Obama's Department of Justice delayed or denied their requests. The State Department also reportedly declined to demand the extradition of important suspects who could have aided the investigation and spearheaded the downfall of this international operation.

Unfortunately, thanks to multiple sources involved in the matter now coming forward, we have learned that the Obama administration likely stalled the Hezbollah investigations and prosecutions in order to keep Iran happy and nuclear deal talks on the table. If the DEA rocked the boat by

arresting and charging key members of Hezbollah's drug and weapons trafficking operations, then Iran might walk away from the negotiating table.

This thinking reveals a fundamental blindness to reality. Hezbollah is funded by Iran. Hezbollah is Iran. While negotiating with Iran, the former administration turned a blind eye to Hezbollah's extensive criminal activities that were only worsening the drug crisis here in the United States and feeding weapons to terrorists in the Middle East region.

American foreign policy can be pragmatic, but this was not pragmatism. This was foolishness. U.S. foreign policymakers traded an end to Iran's nuclear program for the protection of Iran's terrorist program. And even then, we can't even trust Iran to abide by the agreement meant to end their nuclear program.

So we are left with a bad deal. I have said it many times before. But now we know the deal is even worse than we suspected. Aside from just delivering pallets of cash to Iran, aside from just freeing billions in frozen assets, aside from just lifting important sanctions, we are also giving a transnational criminal organization and terrorist network free rein over the world.

We are here today to affirm to the world that Iran and its affiliated terrorist organization, Hezbollah, are enemies of the free world.

We should never negotiate with terrorists. I urge President Trump and America's law enforcement community to once again turn its attention to Hezbollah. This terrorist organization has spread its evil influence throughout the world, and we have a duty to fight it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Georgia, for this opportunity today, and I thank him for bringing this issue up and shining some light on this important subject.

Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative BUCK in his leadership on this, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, not only to Mr. BUCK, but to all of the participants in our discussion this evening, a big thank you for coming and being a part of this.

As more information is beginning to come to light, I am convinced that we are just at the tip of the iceberg of gaining information as to what has taken place here that has jeopardized our national security. I believe it is incumbent upon Congress at this time to fulfill the obligation that we have to exercise oversight over the executive branch and follow through with a thorough investigation of the Obama administration's refusal—absolute refusal—to follow through on the work that was done by the DEA.

□ 2000

We had these terrorists in our grasp, Mr. Speaker, and we let them go. How could this happen? The American people deserve to know why, and we need to get to the bottom of this.

That is why tonight we are calling for an investigation into all aspects of this Hezbollah scandal, regardless of where it leads us: to the very top of the Obama administration, the Secretary of State, the previous Department of Justice, wherever it may lead. We need to get to the bottom of this, and we are calling for an investigation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ROBERT MUELLER SMEAR CAMPAIGN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be organizing this special hour on behalf of the minority.

We are going to be talking tonight about the growing smear campaign against Robert Mueller, the special counsel investigating contacts between Russians interfering in our Presidential election in 2016 and Americans. What we have seen over the last several weeks is a rising tide of criticism of Mr. Mueller in attempts to undermine and sabotage the special counsel investigation.

We are going to be talking about all the different components of this attack, and we are going to be asking the question: Why?

Why suddenly is Mr. Mueller, who was once a hero to our friends across the aisle, a decorated Vietnam war veteran, former Director of the FBI, former U.S. Attorney for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of California, a celebrated law enforcement figure, and a registered Republican—why suddenly has he come under withering attack by everyone from our colleagues across the aisle in the House, to Republicans in the Senate, to people in the White House, to FOX News? Why has the whole rightwing propaganda machine turned on Mr. Mueller in the special counsel investigation suddenly? And what is it that we can do to try to prevent an assault on the special counsel in an effort to dismantle the special counsel investigation?

To begin tonight, I am going to call on a colleague from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS), who is an extraordinary freshman class Member in the House of Representatives representing the people of Florida. She was the chief of police in Orlando, Florida, before she came to Congress; so she has exceptional law enforcement experience and a whole career in law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS.)

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Maryland. I thank him for his leadership on this issue and shining a light on this very important issue tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about the promise of America: that

every person living in this country, a country that we say is the greatest country in the world, where every person can have an opportunity, where every person can have a right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the pursuit of justice.

The promise of America, though, relies on the police officer who walks his beat, come rain or shine. Mr. Speaker, either we enforce our laws, or, if we do not, they are just words on a piece of paper. The promise of America is fulfilled every time a person receives a fair trial. For you see, without a fair-minded search for the truth, we have no society. Or, Mr. Speaker, put it another way, the truth will, indeed, set us free.

The special counsel is a decorated veteran. You have heard my colleague say it, a registered Republican appointed by a Republican President, President Bush. I have personally met Mr. Mueller. After serving 27 years in law enforcement, working very closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, I know him to be a person of honor and integrity.

Mr. Mueller has been praised for his integrity by every Republican leader. You see, he is, Mr. Speaker, a man searching for the truth, and the truth does matter. Without truth, life becomes death, liberty becomes slavery, and the pursuit of happiness becomes impossible.

If a President can shut down an investigation into his activities and deny our right to the truth, then the promise of the America that we love to celebrate is broken. Over the past year, our institutions—law enforcement, the judiciary—have come under daily assault, so persistent, so relentless, that we, on occasion, have tuned it out or brushed it aside. But these assaults, Mr. Speaker, undermine what is essential to our country and our society.

If President Trump chooses to fire the special counsel or otherwise interfere with the legal and appropriate investigation into himself and his staff, it would be a deliberate act to dismantle the fundamental institutions that preserve American democracy and liberty.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow that, and I hope that my Republican colleagues will remember why they came to Congress in the first place. You see, Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress, we are truth seekers, and we know that the special counsel will go only where the evidence leads him. That is the man President Bush appointed, and that is the same person leading this investigation at this very time.

Mr. Speaker, we must let the special counsel finish his work. Failure to do so leaves us with only one question: What is the administration afraid of?

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mrs. DEMINGS for her passion and her leadership. I am delighted to learn today that she will be joining the House Judiciary Committee as a new colleague next week, and I am thrilled about that.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the congressman.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, Mrs. DEMINGS focused our attention on the rule of law and the startling disdain for the rule of law that is being shown in Washington right now, and the President's basic confusion about the proper role for the Department of Justice.

One of my revered colleagues on the House Committee on the Judiciary from California (Mr. TED LIEU), who also serves on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, has had a front row seat to everything that has happened over the course of this year. He saw the Speaker of the House praise Mr. Mueller's appointment; he saw Senator MCCONNELL praise Mr. Mueller's appointment as special counsel; he saw Mr. Mueller's nonpartisanship and professionalism being widely heralded by our colleagues on the Republican side; and now he is watching every day as they do everything in their power to destroy the reputation and the credibility of Mr. Mueller and his excellent team at the special counsel's office.

I have invited Mr. TED LIEU to come up and speak and tell us what he thinks is going on and what is behind this smear campaign.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman RASKIN for organizing this terrific forum tonight.

I am here to, first of all, commend Senator WARNER for going on the Senate floor earlier today and drawing very bright lines for the President of the United States. If Donald Trump were to either get Robert Mueller fired or parting key witnesses, he will be violating those red lines.

Now, everyone is entitled to their opinions, but not to your own facts. So I am going to run through three facts about the special counsel's investigation.

The first is that it is being led by three people: Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who is overseeing the entire investigation; Special Counsel Robert Mueller; and FBI Director Christopher Wray. All three of them are Republicans. They were also appointed by a Republican President.

FBI Director Christopher Wray also happened to have given over \$39,000 in political contributions exclusively to Republicans. So the notion that this investigation is somehow a Democratic investigation is false. It is a Republican investigation investigating a Republican President.

The second fact you should know is Donald Trump cannot actually fire Robert Mueller directly. He would have to fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein first because Mr. Rosenstein came to the Judiciary Committee and testified under oath that there is no cause to fire Special Counsel Mueller.

So for this to happen, Donald Trump would have to get Rod Rosenstein fired. He would have to fire him. Then he would have to find another person

to put in that position who would fire Robert Mueller. So the next person to take Rod Rosenstein's place would be Associate Attorney General Rachel Brand. And while she is conservative and while she also made over \$37,000 of political contributions exclusively to Republicans, she is also known as a person of integrity. I believe she will not fire Robert Mueller. So Donald Trump would have to then fire her. He would then have to stick a third person in, find anyone to fire Robert Mueller.

Well, that is exactly what Richard Nixon did in the Saturday Night Massacre when he fired three Department of Justice officials because the first two would not fire their investigator against Richard Nixon. So if Donald Trump wants to follow in the footsteps of Richard Nixon, he is certainly welcome to try, but it will not end well for him.

And then the third fact that you should know is that no one has been able to attack the actual legal actions of Robert Mueller. There have been two guilty pleas: one of George Papadopoulos, a Trump campaign official on the foreign policy team; and the second is Michael Flynn, the former National Security Advisor to Donald Trump.

No one disputes that those guilty pleas have a solid legal and factual basis. Two other people have also been indicted: Paul Manafort and Mr. Gates. As people know, Mr. Manafort was the campaign manager for Donald Trump for a period of time. No one disputes that those two indictments have a solid factual and legal basis.

So nothing Robert Mueller has done can be attacked, and that is why they are now doing a smear campaign on his team because they are getting desperate. And when I say "they," I am talking about the White House as well as some of my colleagues in the House on the Republican side.

I sat through a Judiciary Committee hearing that I thought was disgraceful, with Members on the other side of the aisle trying to smear not only FBI Director Christopher Wray, but also Rod Rosenstein and Director Mueller. These are good people. They have integrity. And if they think that the Women's March was large, wait till they see what happens if the President actually tries to take these unconstitutional and, what would really amount to, criminal actions because he would be obstructing justice.

So, at the end of the day, it is very important for the American people to understand that no one is above the law. That was the central lesson of Watergate, it is the central lesson of American history, and I urge the President to understand what happened in Watergate and to refrain from taking criminal and unconstitutional actions.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. TED LIEU for his excellent presentation. I would ask one question, and I hope that the law professor in me isn't showing too much, but I wanted to ask

Mr. TED LIEU about one thing he said at the beginning.

Mr. TED LIEU made the point very well that Mr. Mueller is a distinguished law enforcement officer, who is also Republican, and he was appointed by a Republican. Mr. Rosenstein is another distinguished and well-respected law enforcement official, who himself had been appointed by Attorney General Sessions, who is a Republican.

□ 2015

All of that is true. But then Mr. LIEU said this is not a Democratic investigation, which certainly it is not. It is a Republican investigation.

But wouldn't it be more appropriate to say it is a law enforcement investigation?

And if you want to be searching for some kind of partisan tilt, you are going to find that these are Republicans, not Democrats.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for letting me clarify that statement.

It is a law enforcement investigation led by Republicans.

Mr. RASKIN. It is a critical point because, up until all of this started, basically the President respected the independence of the Department of Justice and we didn't go around searching in people's garbage cans trying to find out whether their wife was a registered Democrat or whether they voted Republican. Rather, we assumed that prosecutors and FBI agents and police officers can have a partisan registration and they can vote and participate as long as they do their jobs.

Mr. LIEU's point here is they are doing their job. Nobody is making any complaint about any of the guilty pleas or any of the prosecutions. They are complaining about a bunch of irrelevant stuff.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely right. I trust FBI Director Christopher Wray and Associate Attorney General Rachel Brand to do the right thing, even though they have made contributions to Republicans, because it is demeaning and offensive to the FBI and Department of Justice prosecutors to say that somehow they can't be fair just because they have a political opinion in exercising their rights under the First Amendment.

Keep in mind that under our democracy, fundamental to it is the rule of law. To attack law enforcement and smear their credibility just because you don't like where an investigation is heading is disgraceful.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by quoting my favorite Press Secretary. Sarah Sanders previously said: When you are attacking FBI agents because you are under investigation, you are losing.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. LIEU for all of his excellent work and leadership both in the Judiciary Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER), another distinguished colleague on the House Judiciary Committee, who is also a member of my class, of sorts. He has been in Congress several different times and he makes a great contribution for his people whenever he is here.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Maryland for organizing this special hour this evening and for leading the conversation.

Mr. Speaker, I share my colleagues' concern about the unfounded attacks on the special counsel and the need to make sure that the investigation is allowed to proceed to its conclusion.

But, Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues tonight in also raising grave concerns about the unwillingness of our present administration, including not only the President, but the Justice Department as well, to take seriously the threat of foreign interference in our elections.

It is the unanimous assessment of our intelligence community that the Russian Government launched a focused campaign, at the direction of Vladimir Putin, to interfere in our elections last year.

Irrespective of President Trump's refusal to accept this objective reality or his ongoing efforts to obfuscate the truth, the ongoing threat to the integrity of our elections is real and only likely to increase in 2018. As the Russians sought to disrupt our elections last year, and as they have done so in elections around the world, we can be certain that they will be back next year.

That is why we, as Congress and as a country, need to be urgently focused on how to prevent in future elections the kinds of foreign interference we saw in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, the first primary elections are barely 3 months away and Americans will collectively head to the polls in less than 11 months. The clock is, quite literally, ticking. Without a serious effort to address these varied and increasing threats, we as a nation remain vulnerable.

Over the past month, I have had the opportunity to ask both the number one and number two official at the Department of Justice, as well as the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, about our efforts to secure our elections. Their answers have been far from satisfactory.

In November, Attorney General Jeff Sessions came before the House Judiciary Committee. Three weeks prior to that, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, he admitted to Senator SASSE that his Department had fallen short in addressing election security.

I was, therefore, surprised when I asked Attorney General Sessions about the actions he had taken to secure our elections subsequent to his Senate hearing. He could not name any single specific step taken by the Justice Department.

He admitted: "I have not followed through to see where we are on that."

And then he committed: "I will personally take action to do so."

Nevertheless, when Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appeared before the committee a month later, he could not demonstrate that the Department had even formally reviewed the matter.

It is clear to me that the administration is not handling this threat with the seriousness it deserves.

Last month I led a letter with 15 of my Judiciary colleagues to the Attorney General, calling on him to make good on his commitment to urgently brief Members of Congress on the Department's efforts to secure our elections from foreign meddling. The deadline for this request has come and gone, and there is still not one—no commitment from the Department of Justice to work cooperatively with Congress on this critically important issue.

This inaction is unacceptable. The clock is ticking until our next election, and we need to act and we need to act now. Our Nation needs—and the American people are right to expect—this administration to urgently and aggressively take measures to protect our elections.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. The very foundation of our democracy depends on the integrity of our elections.

I urge my colleagues to join us in our efforts to defend against foreign interference and hold this administration accountable for doing all it can to prevent any interference in the future.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for that excellent and indispensable discussion about what is really at stake here, which is democracy itself. If we can't rely on the integrity of our elections and the authenticity of the results, then democracy is in danger, in deep peril. I thank the gentleman for his leadership and for his outspokenness.

Mr. Speaker, to recap, we are here in this Special Order hour to defend Robert Mueller, because, in America, we live and die by the rule of law under democracy. The rule of law is the revolutionary idea, the one that our forebears fought for in the 18th century, that the most powerful officials in the land will be governed just like everybody else: by constitutional and statutory boundaries fixed in writing in the law in order to protect democracy and the rights of the people.

Ever since he whipped up chants of "Lock her up" in the 2016 campaign, Donald Trump has displayed complete ignorance of the difference between a constitutional democracy and a banana republic, a complete ignorance of the role of judges and the Justice Department.

The men and women who work at the Department of Justice for us, they inhabit a world of law, facts, and evidence. They cannot be forced to execute the President's personal vendettas

or prosecute his enemies, real or imagined, or provide support for his propaganda and delusional alternative facts.

President Trump has been on a collision course with the rule of law for a long time. Remember during the campaign, Mr. Speaker, when he attacked Judge Curiel for being Mexican American, implying that his ethnic identity somehow disqualified him from being a competent judge with integrity.

In February, he trashed Federal judges hearing arguments about his Muslim ban order. He has questioned the separation of powers, which he says is somehow obsolete. He has railed continuously against the free press and the media, which he describes as the enemy of the people.

He has continued, in direct violation of the Foreign Emoluments Clause in Article I, section 9, clause 8, to collect money from foreign governments at the Trump Hotel, at the Trump Tower, at the Trump golf courses without obtaining congressional consent first, which is what the Constitution requires.

The critical flash point for President Trump's hostility to the rule of law recently has been his stubborn and baffling refusal to accept the reality of the Russian campaign to interfere in our election last year, and then his seemingly determination to undermine the investigation into what actually happened.

Most Americans have regarded this campaign of cyber espionage and cyber sabotage of our election as a frightful danger to democratic sovereignty in our country and a reason to dramatically improve election security across the land, as Congressman SCHNEIDER just argued; but Donald Trump keeps denying that the autocrat Vladimir Putin, the former director of the KGB, did anything wrong in our election.

He tried to convince then-FBI Director James Comey to drop his investigation into Trump's National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and to swear a personal loyalty oath to the President. When Comey refused these orders, when he refused this entreaty to change the course of the criminal investigation, when he refused to override his oath to the Constitution of the United States by swearing a personal oath to the President, something that we had never heard of before, Trump fired him. This was about as naked a case of obstruction of justice as you can imagine.

Now we hear from President Trump's personal lawyer that the President cannot be guilty of obstruction of justice. They say, by definition, the President cannot be guilty of obstruction of justice because the President is the chief law enforcement officer in the land.

This is analogous to the old monarchical dogma that the king can do no wrong, the king cannot commit a crime, the king is above the law; if the king does it, it can't be illegal.

Well, our friends seem to have forgotten this is the United States of Amer-

ica. We have got a Constitution here. We have got a Bill of Rights here. We have no kings here. We have no queens here. We have no royalty. We have just we the people, a government of laws, not of men. We have got a Bill of Rights and popular government.

Our friends across the aisle once understood that nobody was above the law. They brought impeachment charges against President Bill Clinton—two charges. One of the charges was obstruction of justice. They moved to impeach President Clinton for obstructing justice, which is now an offense that our friends say a President can't even be guilty of. They brought a case against President Clinton, Clinton v. Jones, which established that a President can even be sued while he is in office and can be deposed and so on.

They understood that at one point. They understand, when a Democrat is President, that nobody's above the law. But now, suddenly, Mr. Speaker, this President is above the law and he gets to determine the course of criminal investigations in the United States of America.

That is not constitutional democracy. That is a banana republic, when the President dictates to law enforcement, dictates to prosecutors what they are going to do, who they are going to investigate, and who will be prosecuted.

So now the race is on, Mr. Speaker, to smear the FBI. The race is on to smear Mr. Mueller, the very man who was praised by Senator McCONNELL, who was praised by Speaker RYAN, who was described by all of our colleagues as beyond reproach, unimpeachable, the former Director of the FBI, former U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts and California, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam war.

Now, suddenly, they cry havoc. They set loose the dogs of war on Mr. Mueller.

Why?

Because he is doing his job. Because we have two guilty pleas: one by the President's former National Security Advisor, Mr. Flynn; and one by Mr. Papadopoulos for lying to government agents.

We have got 12-count indictments that have been handed down against Mr. Manafort and Mr. Gates, and they are afraid that investigation might be closing in on the very highest levels of government.

So what do they do?

They attack the prosecution.

That is what we have been seeing in Washington over the last couple of weeks, a truly extraordinary display of contempt for the rule of law, for the Justice Department, and honest prosecution and law enforcement in the United States of America.

Now, the first effort revolved around an FBI agent who Robert Mueller removed from the investigation in the summertime. He removed him because there were text messages revealed in which he was trashing a lot of political

figures, not just President Trump. He was trashing BERNIE SANDERS, who he called an idiot. He also called President Trump an idiot.

□ 2030

He had unkind words for Eric Holder, and he had very harsh words for my friend and the former Governor of Maryland, Martin O'Malley. He was an equal opportunity insulter.

But our friends, seeing the progress of the Trump-Russia investigation of this special counsel's work, now suddenly decided: We found a villain. We have got our villain. His name is Peter Strzok, and he wrote all these texts, so let's go back to a guy who was removed from the investigation in the summertime. Let's leak all these texts out in the most mysterious and suspicious way, because this was the middle of an inspector general investigation, and they leaked out thousands of texts.

When I asked Mr. Rosenstein about it, he said it had been approved by the inspector general. But the inspector general released a statement the next day which professed that they had not been contacted about it, so there is a whole mystery there.

But, clearly, somebody wanted to get these texts out there. They wanted to create a thick fog of propaganda and confusion. And all that we heard from our colleagues was: Did you see what he said in this text to his friend? Did you see what he said in this text to his friend?

Nobody claimed that the guilty pleas by Flynn or Papadopoulos were legally flawed in any way. They didn't say there were any legal problems with anything that the special counsel had done—no illegal searches, no illegal seizures. They didn't say anything was wrong with the indictment.

But they find some text messages by a guy who was removed from the investigation, and then this becomes the big propaganda smoke screen, this guy who insulted, to my count, a lot more Democrats than he insulted Republicans. Regardless, he showed unprofessionalism.

He was removed quickly by Mr. Mueller—unlike, for example, what President Trump did when he learned that General Flynn, his National Security Advisor, was a serial liar, was lying to Federal agents, was lying to Federal officers, was lying to the Cabinet about his dealings with Russia and foreign governments.

It took President Trump 18 days before he removed him from office in the most begrudging way, and then, even then, after learning that he had been lying about his contacts with foreign agents, he tried to get Mr. Comey, the then-FBI Director, to cancel out the investigation of Michael Flynn, asserting that he is a good guy. Let it go. Let the whole thing go, he said.

But, no, that is not what Mr. Mueller did, the special counsel. When he learned that there were these text messages going out attacking various public figures, he said: We don't need that

kind of stuff on this investigative team. And he got rid of them, end of story.

Except this: It is an opportunity to create an irrelevant distraction from what is going on, to put up a big propaganda smoke screen.

And that wouldn't even be such a big deal in itself. Their arguments are transparently silly. We have colleagues who are saying this is a fruit of the poisonous tree, they intoned. It is all fruit of the poisonous tree.

Except it has nothing to do with fruit of the poisonous tree. That is a Fourth Amendment document which says that, if there is an illegal search or seizure by the government, the government may not use that unlawfully obtained evidence against someone in court. At that point, the exclusionary rule operates; the exclusionary rule is activated.

We asked our colleagues, and I asked Mr. Rosenstein: Was there an illegal search?

No.

Was there an illegal seizure?

No.

There was no illegality. You had an agent who sent some text messages trashing a bunch of politicians in the middle of a Presidential campaign, which is what millions of people were doing. It was irresponsible. He got removed, end of story.

That didn't work so well. That was the first time that they were throwing spaghetti with tomato sauce on it all over the walls. They threw it up and it slipped off. Nobody bought it.

So the next day, or a day later, they came back with another claim about asserting that the GSA had improperly released emails of the Trump Presidential transition team.

Well, there are a few problems with that. One is everybody was told from the beginning that all of those are government property. They were turned over by Trump's GSA, voluntarily. And Mr. Mueller released a one-sentence statement saying that all of the information that we have received was either voluntarily given or was lawfully obtained, end of story.

That didn't work so well either. Threw some more spaghetti against the wall in this smear campaign, and it slides off. It leaves a tomato sauce stain all over the wall, but it doesn't really stick.

Now they are going after Mr. McCabe, the number two person at the FBI. And I haven't been told exactly what their complaint is, but we are going to have a closed-door hearing about it tomorrow in the House Judiciary Committee. From published reports, all I understand is that he has committed the great sin and crime of being married to a woman who is active in Democratic Party politics.

Look, let's get something straight here. This is the United States of America, and law enforcement officers have a right to be registered as a Democrat, as an Independent, as a Republican, as a Green Party member, as a

Libertarian. They can register however they want. And consistent with the Hatch Act, they can be involved in politics and members of their family can be involved in politics. There is nothing wrong that.

There is nothing wrong with the fact that Mr. Mueller, who is now the target of all of their venom, is a registered Republican or that he got appointed by another Republican, Mr. Rosenstein, or that he got appointed by a Republican, Attorney General Sessions, or that he got appointed by a Republican, President Trump; right? All those people are Republicans. They have a right to be Republicans, but they have got to do their public duty.

The irony, of course, is that the Republicans are attacking Republicans in office for being partisan against Republicans. It is completely incoherent; it is fantastical; and it shows the desperation of this smear campaign. It just doesn't make sense to anyone.

So we will see if they are able to smear another good, qualified, competent law enforcement official, which is what they want to do with the number two person at the FBI.

And what is interesting is that the people who are attacking their fellow Republicans for somehow being partisan just for doing their jobs never have anything to say about what we know was the real political corruption and contamination of the FBI back in the days of J. Edgar Hoover, when he used the resources of the FBI to go after Martin Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement, or the days of COINTELPRO, where the FBI actively tried to disrupt the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement and so on. They don't say anything about that.

It would strengthen their argument, of course, that their fellow Republican partisans somehow might be capable of political bias, but they don't even have the historical context to do that, and they don't believe in it.

The fact is that the FBI used to have a real problem with being a tool of political prosecution, and it has gotten over that. It has gotten beyond it today, in 2017.

Now, suddenly, all of their fire is trained on Mr. Mueller. It is trained on the special counsel: discredit and undermine him. And it wouldn't be such a big deal if they were just exercising their First Amendment rights, which they have every right to do. If they were just exercising their rights under the Speech and Debate Clause, which they have every right to do, to use their place in this body in order to denounce the FBI, to attack Mr. Mueller, to try to discredit law enforcement, they have got the right to do it. But what everyone is afraid of now is that they are trying to set the stage for the removal of Robert Mueller.

Now, that is no simple thing. The President can't simply fire Mr. Mueller. He would have to get Mr. Rosenstein to do it. And he can't be

fired for any reason at all. He can only be fired for misconduct, for conflict of interest, or for some other good cause or incapacity. So there has got to be a reason why.

And when we asked Mr. Rosenstein whether he saw any reason to remove Mr. Mueller now, he said, no, that he is totally satisfied with the conduct of the investigation.

So what trumped-up alibi could they produce? What trumped-up justification could they find for the removal of Mr. Mueller?

It would create a serious constitutional emergency and crisis in America. And, of course, when we say a constitutional crisis, it is not the Constitution that is in crisis; it is us. They would be creating a political crisis that would require a resort to extraordinary constitutional mechanisms.

This would be a clearly impeachable offense for the President to use his power in order to thwart a criminal investigation that implicates the President. That is the very definition of obstruction of justice. It would just be an expansion and a refinement of what the President was doing when he fired Mr. Comey way back in the beginning of the administration for refusing to lay off Michael Flynn and for refusing to swear a personal loyalty oath to the President of the United States instead of to the Constitution and the people of the country.

So that is where we are. The people need to know. The people need to know what is going on, that there is an organized campaign being orchestrated at the highest levels of government to discredit Mr. Mueller and the special counsel investigation—not for not doing their job, but for doing their job. That is why they are being attacked today.

Mr. Speaker, I close with a thought just about the rule of law.

The rule of law is the idea that even the people who occupy the highest office in the land are subject to the Constitution, are subject to the laws of the people, because here the people govern. We have no kings here. That is what we rebelled against.

Our Founders believed, with Madison, that the very definition of tyranny is the collapse of all powers into one, where someone says: I have got all the power; I am the boss. Our Founders said: No, we are going to divide powers up:

Article I, we will vest the lawmaking power in the representatives of the people in the House and the Senate;

Article II, we will create a President who will take care that the laws be faithfully executed;

And then Article III, we will vest the judicial power in the Supreme Court and the Federal judiciary to sort out actual cases or controversies about what the law means.

But notice what comes first there, Article I. The people's representatives come first. The President works for us. The President works for a Congress,

which works for the people. The President implements the laws that we pass here.

The President is not above the law. The President is subject to the law, and the President has the honor of enforcing the laws that we adopt.

So let's get that straight. No one is above the law. Anybody can be found guilty of obstructing justice if one thing can be shown: if they obstruct justice.

And it looks like they are setting the stage for a further obstruction of justice with this outrageous smear campaign being leveled this week against Robert Mueller, against Mr. Rosenstein, against Mr. McCabe, and against the men and women of the FBI. That is what is taking place in Washington today.

Mr. Speaker, the people need to know, and we in Congress have got to do our constitutional duty, too.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LEWIS of Minnesota). Remarks in debate in the House may not engage in personalities toward the President or Members of the Senate, whether originating as the Member's own words or being reiterated from another source.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 42 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 2244

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. CHENEY) at 10 o'clock and 44 minutes p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BYRNE. Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, December 21, 2017, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

3461. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting a letter report on Federal Government energy management for FY 2015 providing information on energy consumption in Federal buildings, operations, and vehicles, with multiple reporting requirements, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 15852(d); Public Law 109-58, Sec. 203(d); (119 Stat. 653); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3462. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of

Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's annual report entitled "United States Tobacco Product Exports That Do Not Conform to Tobacco Product Standards", pursuant to Sec. 801(p)(1) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

3463. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a report covering the period from August 9, 2017, to November 8, 2017 on the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1541 note; Public Law 102-1, Sec. 3 (as amended by Public Law 106-113, Sec. 1000(a)(7)); (113 Stat. 1501A-422) and 50 U.S.C. 1541 note; Public Law 107-243, Sec. 4(a); (116 Stat. 1501); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3464. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Belarus that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 95-223, Sec. 204(c); (91 Stat. 1627); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3465. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the CY 2016 report on the Employment of United States Citizens in Certain International Organizations, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276c-4; Public Law 102-138, Sec. 181 (as amended by Public Law 114-323, Sec. 308); (130 Stat. 1923); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3466. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser, Office of Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting reports concerning international agreements other than treaties entered into by the United States to be transmitted to the Congress within the sixty-day period specified in the Case-Zablocki Act, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b(a); Public Law 92-403, Sec. 1(a) (as amended by Public Law 108-458, Sec. 7121(b)); (118 Stat. 3807); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3467. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a certification, pursuant to Sec. 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, Transmittal No.: DDTTC 17-018; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3468. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a report on the status of U.S. citizens detained in Iran and the Department's efforts to secure their release, pursuant to Public Law 115-44, Sec. 110; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

3469. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting a detailed report justifying the reasons for the extension of locality-based comparability payments to non-General Schedule categories of positions that are in more than one executive agency, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 5304(h)(2)(C); Public Law 89-554, Sec. 5304(h) (as added by Public Law 102-378, Sec. 2(26)(E)(ii)); (106 Stat. 1349); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3470. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Education, transmitting the Department's Agency Financial Report for FY 2017, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a)(1); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-289, Sec. 2(a)); (116 Stat. 2049); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3471. A letter from the Executive Analyst (Political), Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting two notifications of a designation of acting officer and discontinuation of service in acting role, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-

277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3472. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting a notification of a vacancy and designation of acting officer, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3473. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Financial Report, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a)(1); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-289, Sec. 2(a)); (116 Stat. 2049); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3474. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's Fiscal Year 2017 Federal Housing Administration Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund Report, pursuant to 12 U.S.C. 1708(a)(4); June 27, 1934, ch. 847, title II, Sec. 202(a)(4) (as amended by Public Law 110-289, Sec. 2118(a)); (122 Stat. 2810); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3475. A letter from the Acting Chairman, Federal Maritime Commission, transmitting the Commission's Office of the Inspector General's Semiannual Report to Congress for the period April 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3476. A letter from the Deputy Liaison, Institute for Education Science, Department of Education, transmitting a notification of a nomination, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3477. A letter from the Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts, transmitting the Endowment's Semiannual Report to the Congress of the Inspector General and the Chairman's Semiannual Report on Final Action Resulting from Audit Reports, Inspection Reports, and Evaluation Reports for the period of April 1, 2017, through September 30, 2017, pursuant to Sec. 5 of the Inspector General Act of 1978; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3478. A letter from the Treasurer, National Gallery of Art, transmitting the Gallery's Inspector General Act of 1978 report for FY 2017; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3479. A letter from the Labor Member and Management Member, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the Board's Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2017, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a)(1); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-289, Sec. 2(a)); (116 Stat. 2049); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3480. A letter from the Acting Chairman, Surface Transportation Board, transmitting the Board's Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2017, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3515(a)(1); Public Law 101-576, Sec. 303(a)(1) (as amended by Public Law 107-289, Sec. 2(a)); (116 Stat. 2049); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

3481. A letter from the Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting the Report of the Attorney General to the Congress of the United States on the Administration of the Foreign Agents Registration Act for the six months ending June 30, 2017, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 621; June 8, 1938, ch. 327, Sec. 11 (as amended by Public Law