we can work with. That is why I took the time to talk about the Americans that are now covered, the seniors that now have drug coverages, the end of discrimination based upon preexisting conditions. That is why I talked about those things.

In a repeal—and the President called for a flat-out repeal—that is gone. It is gone. If you want to do that, don't count on me. I won't be there. But if you want to take the Affordable Care Act and if you want to deal with the problems that we know are there, then let's work together.

I just laid out five things. There are 17 more that have been suggested by my Democratic colleagues. We can improve the well-being of Americans. We can help those people.

As for my wife's hairdresser, I don't know if she is going to get pregnant because she doesn't know if she is going to continue to have coverage. For that farmer, that woman who is running her own family farm, she doesn't know either. There are 23 million Americans who are in that position—23, and quite possibly more—who don't know if a year from now, 2 years from now, they will have health insurance.

So, President Roosevelt: ''The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.''

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

HONORING MR. CLARENCE GOODEN

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

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the great community stewardship of Mr. Clarence Gooden, recently retired president of the CSX Railroad.

In 2003, Mr. Speaker, I was newly elected sheriff of the city of Jacksonville, Florida, and my wife, Pat, and I were invited to a Christmas dinner hosted by Mr. Clarence Gooden and his wife, Corkie.

It was during my discussions surrounding my new position as sheriff that I shared with Clarence and his wife how drug dealers had taken over Mallison Park, which in years past was actually the crown jewel of parks in the city of Jacksonville. I explained to them how the park manager had been severely battered by drug dealers, and though we had made several arrests in the park, the dealers continued to return, and the children were being denied the use of this great park.

Mr. Speaker, I also shared with him a campaign promise that I had made to help at-risk youth through an expansion of an intervention program called the Police Athletic League into areas such as Mallison Park, which would offer at-risk youth sports programs, after-school tutoring, food, and personal hygiene, all provided by specialized officers trained in intervention.

Clarence asked me the cost of such an expansion, and I informed him it would be close to $100,000 to refurbish and move programs into Mallison Park. He immediately responded, Mr. Speaker, that he would raise those funds by April. I reminded him it was already the end of December, but he and Corkie assured me that they would meet an April deadline.

Incredibly, Clarence devised a plan for what became known as the CSX Charity Train Ride, which entailed a fundraiser that gave contributors an amazing train ride with dinner and entertainment. The event was a first-class success, and Clarence had raised all the funds necessary to refurbish Mallison Park and move the Police Athletic League into those new facilities. Their efforts led to an over 40 percent drop in violent crime within a 1-mile radius of Mallison Park.

Over the years, the CSX Charity Train Ride grew into one of the largest single charity events in northeast Florida, and it continued to add additional charity recipients every year.

Mr. Speaker, Clarence and Corkie, with the assistance of Mrs. Rosemary Thigpen, have raised, to date, over $4 million for over 10 local charities. Last year alone, they raised over $400,000 for charities, including Angelwood, the Police Athletic League, and the American Heart Association, just to name a few. Not only does he have a huge heart for the community, but he never lost his concern for others as he worked his way up throughout his career.

Mr. Speaker, Clarence actually began as a laborer at Seaboard Coastline Railroad before it became CSX, and he worked his way up the ranks to the president's office of a tier one railroad. He recently retired from CSX, and I know he will continue to have passion for others.

I appreciate his dedication to the citizens of northeast Florida. I am sure I echo the thoughts of all when I wish him and Corkie continued good health and happiness in both his retirement and all of their future endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing Mr. Gooden soon and presenting him with this coin as a token of the tremendous appreciation from all of those in the Fourth District whose lives Mr. Gooden, Mrs. Gooden, and CSX have touched.

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

□ 2015

HEALTHCARE ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to hear all the rhetoric about Republican efforts that a majority of Americans have wanted us to take. Going back to even before ObamaCare was passed, the majority of Americans didn't want ObamaCare passed.

I have been amazed at some of the rhetoric from across the aisle, I think from the former Speaker, who said something about how open their process was.

Really?

Anyway, I know sometimes our memories aren't what they once were. That was not a terribly open process. I believe the Speaker back then said: We don't need any Republican vote and we don't want your input. Basically those were the words I recall.

People were promised over and over again by the President of the United States that if you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance. On at least one occasion he even said the word ''period,'' there are no exceptions. If you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance.

So it was quite disappointing. Some of us knew this was a disastrous bill. I did read it. I didn't have to wait until Speaker PELOSI passed it to find out what was in it. I read it and I knew it was going to be a disaster.

Then, after it passed, we ultimately find out that they knew well in advance that if you liked your insurance, there was a very good chance you would not be able to keep your insurance, period. It wasn't true. All those, including the President, went around saying: If you like your insurance, you can keep it. According to statements after the fact by people involved, yes, they talked about it and they knew people were going to lose their insurance. They are going to lose their doctor, they are going to lose their healthcare provider, but we can't say those things and still pass this bill. We can't let that get out there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want people to remember how this disastrous legislation ever came about in the first place, and how, going against the will of the American people to pass the disastrous bill—around 2,500 pages is what my two volumes came to—but people knew it was going to do lot of damage to people's health and their lives. As we know, when you cannot get the healthcare you need or the lifesaving healthcare you have been getting, you no longer live.

It is amazing now, after ObamaCare passed 7 years, to find out things about the knowing design of ObamaCare. They knew that insurance companies, under ObamaCare, were given incentives not to have the best people to treat cancer, the best cancer healthcare providers, the best cancer lifesavers in the network.

They had incentives under ObamaCare to not include the best physicians and hospitals that will save the lives of people who have cancer; don't include the best healthcare providers that will help those save their

lives, or at least prolong the lives of those with AIDS; don't include in your insurance coverage the best healthcare providers for those with heart problems.

If you don't include the best healthcare providers for cancer, AIDS, heart problems, or whatever it is, then people who are going to cost you a lot of money will not likely choose your insurance.

It was all part of the design to implode healthcare in America, destroy the broken system we had so that people would eventually throw up their hands and say: Well, I didn't originally want healthcare, but surely anything will be better than what we have.

Apparently, from the beginning, the intention was to set it up to give Big Pharma, to give some insurance companies, basically, not only incentives, but mandates that would force their prices ever upward. As Big Pharma knew, they were going to make profits like they had never made in their history.

As I have told some of the Representatives before, when they signed onto ObamaCare, they basically signed your own death warrant. Yes, you will make tens, maybe hundreds of billions more than you have in the past, but eventually it will lead to your industry being controlled by the government in such a way that you will be like pharmaceutical companies in Third World countries where they are allowed to collect the costs of production and maybe a small percentage above that, which means there are no new lifesaving, life-enhancing drugs being produced in countries like that. Eventually, down the road, ObamaCare would destroy the incentives to create new lifesaving drugs and it would be the end of this incredible run of decades of the most incredible advances in medicine in the history of the world.

Some medical historians say that maybe 100 years or so ago, protocols around the time of World War I were the line of demarcation in our history. Somewhere around the early 20th century, early 1900s, there was a point where—before that point in time, if you went to a doctor, your odds were better of getting worse. If you go to a doctor seeking help for a healthcare problem, the odds were you would get worse. On the other side of that line, in the early 1900s, was a point that if you went to a doctor for healthcare help, your odds of getting well were better than of getting worse.

So it is pretty remarkable, if those historians are right, that for the thousands of years of recorded history, it is only the last 100 years where you had a chance of getting better if you sought medical help than of getting worse if you got medical help.

Look at what has happened since then. It is just incredible, especially since the 1950s. I would submit that the Founders' vision in creating copyright and patent protection for intellectual creations and thought helped drive those developments in healthcare. It made a lot of people wealthy. But there is nothing like real incentive, more luxury, more freedom, more enjoyment because of the huge rewards of great intellectual creations. Healthcare had just become incredible.

I began to notice after I got to Congress that my friends across the aisle were completely skewing the massive difference between health insurance and healthcare. Health insurance was an even newer thing to most Americans. For healthcare—as we say, maybe the historians are right—it is around 100 years ago that, for the first time, you had a better chance of getting better than you had of getting worse after seeking a doctor's help. But wow, the advances, the progress that was made.

The more the government interferes and dictates who gets what, the more rationed care you get, the less advances in healthcare, the less incentives there are to create lifesaving, life-enhancing medications. When government is the most powerful player in healthcare, you will always end up with rationed healthcare.

Some point to the situation with the small child, Charlie Gard, in the U.K. They say that is what happens when you have bureaucrats deciding who gets to live and who has to die. But the more appropriate analysis, I think, is they are not actually deciding so much the ultimate conclusion of who gets to live and who has to die, but what they are really doing to get there is deciding, rationing, which lives, in the opinion of government bureaucrats, are more important or may be more helpful to the socialist movement, to the bureaucratic entrenchment than someone else.

If you are perceived by the government bureaucracy or the government bureaucrats, the D.C. bureaucrats as being a threat to more government—more powerful government, more control of the individual, if you are a threat to those things, then you can pretty well be assured that when your situation is analyzed by the bureaucrats, you are not going to be eligible for the lifesaving medications and you are not going to be eligible for the hip replacement because we looked at your age and you have had a nice life and it is time to give it up. We don't have enough for everybody to have everything we want, so we in Washington will decide who gets to live and who gets to die. Actually, we decide who gets what treatment.

In the case of Charlie Gard, it is not a lack of concern about life; it is just in the opinion of the bureaucrats, where it always goes with socialized medicine. We only have limited government resources, therefore, we have to be careful whom we help. In their opinion, Charlie Gard may not make it.

□ 2030

The way Americans, a majority of Americans, at least, used to feel was every life is worth trying to protect. Of course, along came Roe v. Wade and made clear only those lives are worthy of protecting if a mother wants to protect them.

We even had people in the previous administration that had voted, made the pronouncement through their actions and votes, statements, that even if a child is born alive after an attempted abortion, in the opinion of those individuals, like our former President, you still should be able to kill the child even if the child is born alive because the mother wanted the child aborted, so go ahead and kill the child.

I am grateful for all the stalwarts over the years, but I believe we have seen a change in that philosophy in the realization, like with the heartbeat bill, that says, in essence, if a child has a heartbeat, they are a living person and may not be aborted.

So it is an interesting time here in America, but it has now resulted in a lot of rhetoric that is really outrageous. You know, I have said for years here on this floor that, with all the allegations, statements, verbal wars that have gone on across the aisle, you know, we know that no one on the Democratic side wants to harm people, wants people hurt. We don't question their motives, and yet, as I am in my office hearing friends across the aisle—okay, I am using the term ''friends'' loosely—but hearing them use terms about how we want people to die. We have come to a sad place in our history.

This story, June 30, from FOX News, was reporting on statements made by some individuals. This quote said—this is from Massachusetts Senator ELIZABETH WARREN: ''These Medicaid cuts are blood money. People will die. Let's be very clear: Senate Republicans are paying for tax cuts for the wealthy with American lives.''

Senator BERNIE SANDERS appeared on NBC's ''Meet the Press'' to predict thousands would die if a projected 23 million drop or lose their insurance. And Senator SANDERS accused Republicans of trading healthcare for tax breaks to the rich: ''Is this what America is supposed to be about, taking away health insurance from kids with disabilities, from people with cancer in order to give tax breaks to the billionaires?

''Let us be clear, and this is not trying to be overly dramatic: Thousands of people will die if the Republican healthcare bill becomes law.''

Well, you want to fact-check that, of course. If the Republicans' healthcare bill, whatever it says in the Senate, is passed, thousands of people will die. If the bill is not passed, thousands of people will die. So I guess we can't say it is not true. People are going to die whether it passes or not, but the implication is that Republicans, through their efforts, are going to kill people.

What I would just like is an acknowledgment from our friends across the aisle, like Senator SANDERS, that there

have been people since ObamaCare has passed who lost their insurance, lost their healthcare provider, didn't get the treatments they needed, their way of life was harmed; and there are bound to have been a lot of people who died sooner than they would have earlier if the President's words had not been hollow that, if you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance, and if ObamaCare had not rewarded insurance companies for not including places like MD Anderson, treating for cancer, or good healthcare providers.

Obviously, if they have the best healthcare providers for cancer, for these other life-ending diseases, then people will use their insurance, drive up the cost; so it really created an incentive for insurance companies not to get the best end-of-life treaters in their network. To their credit, some have, but many haven't. So it has been amazing.

Here is other rhetoric. The former Senator, Hillary Clinton, said: ''Forget death panels. If Republicans pass this bill, they're the death party.''

I mean, maybe that is one of the reasons she didn't win. I mean, that is just an outrageous thing to say.

This article goes on to say: ''Some Democrats traveled the country to ring the alarm. Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper came to Washington to lobby against the measure, which he said was immoral and would lead to 100,000 deaths by 2026.''

Now, there is this liberal group, apparently, Center for American Progress, liberal think tank—I don't know what their tank is full of, but it is obviously more socialistic thinking. But according to this liberal group, the Center of American Progress, if 23 million fewer people have health insurance, then the coverage losses from the Senate bill would result in 27,700 additional deaths in 2026 and 217,000 over the decade.

Well, isn't that interesting. There is nothing that they can adequately point to as a factual basis. Any citing of CBO, whose margin of error on ObamaCare could have been anywhere from plus or minus 200 to 400 percent—CBO is not a source that should ever be cited with a straight face. They just shouldn't be.

I agree with my friend, Dr. Arthur Laffer, that when it comes to tax reform, we just need to forget CBO. They don't know ''sic 'em'' from ''come here.'' They explain, yes, they create these models, so they don't really come up with a score. They create models that provide us the scores: garbage in, garbage out.

So it has just gotten to be a sad state of affairs because people are hurting across America. And I know there is apparently 25 percent in my district. I have heard them. I understand they want to keep ObamaCare. They want to move towards socialism. They like the government having so much control over their lives. Just go ahead and check them into an Orwellian center and let them enjoy Big Brother taking care of them.

But I do represent their best interests, and I think the 75 percent in my district are right about what will be best, that ObamaCare needs to be repealed. We need to get relationships back between a patient and a doctor without an insurance company or a government in between them—except for very rare occasions—as it once was. It used to be the government didn't have anything to say much at all about that other than having the FDA, things like that. But insurance companies came along, and they were only for catastrophic problems, so we still had complete control of our healthcare.

I do appreciate, greatly appreciate, House Minority Leader NANCY PELOSI referencing the need to honor God. That means a lot to me. Her statement that to minister to the needs of God's creation is an act of worship, to ignore those needs is to dishonor the God who made us, but if the government is big and strong enough to say who gets healthcare and who doesn't, who gets treatment, who gets the lifesaving care and who doesn't, then that is to put government in the place of God, and nothing dishonors God more than to have any person or any entity that believes it is the substitute for God.

The United States Government is not a substitute for God. Without God's blessing, as our Founders repeatedly made clear, we wouldn't have even the freedom we have today.

Joseph Schmitz, on July 5, wrote a terrific article, and it is absolutely worth every Republican taking note of. I would encourage my friends across the aisle to take note of it, but I understand their positions. They cannot participate in the repeal of ObamaCare because they staked the majority—well, they staked future socialism on this bill.

Mr. Schmitz says: ''In early 2016, Congress passed H.R. 3762, a law that would have repealed most of ObamaCare. On January 8, 2016, Obama vetoed that would-be ObamaCare Repeal Act.

''240 years earlier, Congress declared 'to a candid world' that, 'The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these States.' Among other usurpations specified in the Declaration of Independence, 'He' ''—talking about the king—'' 'has erected a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.'

''Our 1776 Declaration of Independence concluded, 'We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world' ''—that is not the government. That is appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world—'' 'for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by authority of the good people of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states; . . . and for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.'

''In July 2017, Congress should likewise acknowledge the 'swarms of officers' harassing our good people under the guise of ObamaCare and reenact the 2016 ObamaCare Repeal Act.

''Note well below the revenue-raising nature of the ObamaCare repeal sections of H.R. 3762, keeping in mind that ObamaCare originated in 2009 as the 'Senate Health Care bill,' and the Constitution provides that, 'All bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives.' '' That is Article I, section 7, clause 1.

□ 2045

And he goes on for quite some time to cite all the different sections in ObamaCare that actually make it a revenue-raising bill. Section 204 has the individual mandate mandating people have to pay money and buy something; section 205, an employer mandate mandating that they must pay a massive tax like the individual or pay for insurance, buy a product. For the first time in American history, citizens are required to buy a product, employers are ordered to buy a product. Section 206, Federal payments to the States; section 209, repeal of the tax on employee health insurance premiums and health plan benefits; section 210, repeal of the tax on over-the-counter medications.

I am sorry. These are the names of the sections in the House bill. Those were not in ObamaCare. These are the provisions in the House bill that would repeal all these taxes, as Chief Justice Roberts called them.

So these are all good sections, is what Joe Schmitz is pointing out, individual mandate, employer mandate, getting rid of those, Federal payments to States. It is just taking out a repeal of the employee tax. So there we go. It is eliminating so much of the taxes on individuals, repeal of the tax on over-the-counter medications.

This was the Democrats, without a single Republican vote, who passed this legislation, ObamaCare, the ACA. They put a tax on over-the-counter medications, they put a tax on employee health insurance premiums and a tax on health plan benefits, and they put a tax on health savings accounts. They had already paid money on that that went in it, but anyway.

So the Republican bill that President Obama vetoed, it would repeal limitations on contributions to flexible spending accounts. You can put as much as you want in there. It would repeal the tax on prescription medication. ObamaCare actually put a tax on your precious prescription medications that are saving people's lives.

Anybody who would have the gall after voting for all these taxes put on the backs of poor people who can't even hardly afford their prescriptions as they are, and, yes, they have been skyrocketing under ObamaCare, and to say that Republicans are trying to harm people and dishonor God, for Heaven's sake, read your own bill.

They put a tax on medical devices. Senior citizens who had to have help moving or walking, you got to pay a tax on that, and we don't care if you can't afford the tax and you can't move around anymore. We are the government.

That was the ACA, ObamaCare, that put that tax in place, and another health insurance tax in the bill, and it eliminated the deduction for expenses allocatable to Medicare part D subsidies. It placed a tax called a chronic care tax, there was a Medicare tax increase, there was a tanning tax, there was a net investment tax, all kinds of taxes in ObamaCare. They hammered the American people.

We were promised—President Obama stood right there and promised no money would pay for abortions under his healthcare bill, under the healthcare bill they were going to pass. That is what he said. He said no people illegally in the United States were going to get their healthcare on the backs of people in America legally. Both of those were not true. It turns out Joe Wilson was prescient.

It is time to wake up. We were sent back into the majority because ObamaCare was passed, and we are going to be sent back in the minority, appropriately, if we don't repeal it.

President Trump has made clear in a recent tweet: Look, if you guys can't pass the replacement now, at least pass the repeal, then we can start moving together on a replacement.

Surely the Democrats will want to come and not be so obstructionist once their precious ObamaCare has been struck down; then maybe they will actually work with us to create a better system, but it is time to wake up, it is time to repeal ObamaCare.

Now, I want to touch on one other subject, Mr. Speaker, and that is involving all this mess, these allegations about Russia.

It was not Donald J. Trump nor any Republican who told the Russians—the Russian leaders, actually: I will have a lot more flexibility after the election.

That can only mean one thing: I am going to give away a lot more of America's strength, helping you out in Russia. As you are trying to get stronger, I am going to give away a lot more of our strength, maybe our edge over your military. I will have more ability to give that away after I am elected to a second term. Tell Vladimir.

It was not a Republican, certainly not anyone associated with Donald Trump, who went to Russia with a supposed reset button, couldn't get the translation right, but wanting to reset the relationship.

And for those who didn't follow history well back then, the reason there was a strain in the relationship between the United States and Russia was because George W. Bush as President of the United States stood on principle, and when the country of Russia, under Putin, attacked Georgia, President Bush, appropriately, was outraged, and he pushed for sanctions to let Russia know that the United States does not approve of Russia attacking sovereign countries.

So the message that President Obama and Hillary Clinton wanted to get across to Putin and the Russians was, with a wink and lots of pats and happy times: Look, George W. Bush as President, we think, overreacted when you attacked Georgia, you know. So we want to let you know we want a reset button, because under President Obama and me, Hillary Clinton, we are not going to overreact when you attack neighboring sovereign countries. We are okay with that, see, and we want things reset. We are not going to get upset like Bush did when you attacked a neighboring country.

That is the message that came across very loud and clear to Putin and those around him.

I would like to think I learned during my summer as an exchange student in the Soviet Union a little bit about the way a lot of Russians think. I get surprised when people say: It is so hard to read Putin. No, it is not. The man was part of the KGB. He wants the glory days of the old Soviet Union back even though they were built on a skeleton that could never maintain the weight that such a Socialist country was putting on that frame.

So then we find out here, this was back in January, January 11, 2017, an article in Politico of all places, surprise, surprise, by Kenneth P. Vogel and David Stern, it says: ''Ukrainian government officials tried to help Hillary Clinton and undermine Trump by publicly questioning his fitness for office. They also disseminated documents implicating a top Trump aide in corruption and suggested they were investigating the matter, only to back away after the election. And they helped Clinton's allies research damaging information on Trump and his advisers, a Politico investigation found.

''A Ukrainian-American operative who was consulting for the Democratic National Committee met with top officials in the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington in an effort to expose ties between Trump, top campaign aide Paul Manafort and Russia, according to people with direct knowledge of the situation.''

This is Politico reporting on the collusion between Hillary Clinton, her campaign, and the country of Ukraine to stop and defeat Trump.

Now, where has the Politico reporting on this issue been since January? I appreciate them pointing this out back in January, but apparently at this point back in January, Politico had not yet gotten the word from their friends on the Democratic side of the aisle: hey, hey, kind of soft-pedal that stuff where we colluded with the Ukrainians to try to take Trump out, because we are going to make that a big allegation about Trump and the Russians, so kind of back off that. Let's take the spotlight off that one.

The article goes on: ''The Ukrainian efforts had an impact in the race, helping to force Manafort's resignation and advancing the narrative that Trump's campaign was deeply connected to Ukraine's foe to the east, Russia. But they were far less concerted or centrally directed than Russia's alleged hacking and dissemination of Democratic emails.

''Russia's effort was personally directed by Russian President Vladimir Putin. . . . ''

So they go on and try to do what they can to help, you know, salvage some respect for the Democrats here. There is little evidence of such a top-down effort by Ukraine, but the fact is Ukraine did collude with Hillary Clinton's campaign, and they were successful in helping the Trump campaign, Manafort had to be fired, and they are still trying to create clouds surrounding that. But anyway, how about that?

Well, it leads to one conclusion, and that is that it is part of the evidence that we have got to have an independent counsel, and I don't mean Robert Mueller. I am talking about an independent counsel, not one that is bosom buddies with Comey; and not one that can't stand Trump; and not one that is going to run out, not hire any Republicans for his staff who love Trump, but just hire people who can't stand him and wanted Hillary elected.

This is a guy who has been vindictive, who has worked closely with Comey in the past, and he is in no position whatsoever to judge anything about James Comey.

If you go back and look at what is required under 28 CFR 45.2, it provides that a Department of Justice attorney should not participate in investigations that may involve entities or individuals with whom the attorney has a political or personal relationship.

Mueller and Comey are buddies. They have closely consulted on so many things.

□ 2100

For example, this story from June 7, 2017, by Josh Siegel, says:

''Former FBI Director Jim Comey 'closely coordinated' with Special Counsel Robert Mueller before his planned testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee about his interactions with President Trump.

''FOX News reported a source close to Comey said the former FBI Director consulted with Mueller about how to approach Thursday's Senate Intelligence Committee hearing. The Department of Justice appointed Mueller

special counsel to lead the investigation of Russia's involvement in the 2016 election, and any possible collusion with the Trump campaign. Mueller and Comey were longtime colleagues at the Justice Department, and legal experts say it would not be unusual for a special counsel to be in contact with somebody who is a party to its investigation.''

Mueller and Comey were longtime colleagues at the Justice Department.

Well, anyway, there needs to be an independent counsel who will investigate the goings-on between Robert Mueller and James Comey with the recent revelations about Comey's very apparent release of classified information.

Bob Mueller is not in a position to judge him. And a great piece of evidence that Robert Mueller is not fit to be the special counsel investigating this matter is the fact that he didn't recuse himself because of his close relationship with Comey, and how Comey is a critical witness in what he accuses Trump of, which doesn't seem to really be a crime.

But, based on Comey's testimony before the Senate, it bears going back and looking at a normal FBI employment agreement that says: I will surrender upon demand by the FBI or upon my separation from the FBI all materials containing FBI information in my possession.

They also have a breach of contract case there because the FBI Director carried stuff with him, that he prepared on his government time with his government equipment, saved with his government equipment, and passed on, apparently, with his government equipment, that appears to have been classified, according to the new releases coming out now.

If you look at Comey's conduct in the past, as this article from Mollie Hemingway on June 12, 2017, pointed out, he had pressured John Ashcroft to recuse himself from the responsibility of investigating the supposed, the alleged, leak of Valerie Plame's identity. It turns out the prosecutor knew on day one who it was—Richard Armitage—but he wasn't honest enough to say: ''We know. I don't need to spend millions and millions of dollars of government tax dollars and waste thousands and thousands of hours investigating. We know the answer.''

No, no, no. This was Comey's dear friend, Patrick Fitzgerald—not just a close personal friend, but godfather to one of his children—and Comey gave the role of special counsel into that leak on Valerie Plame's identity. It was Comey who gave that to Patrick Fitzgerald, his close friend.

What a travesty that turned out to be. That was a fraud upon the American Government by Patrick Fitzgerald. He knew on day one the answer to his investigation, but he wanted a scalp, so he wasted a tremendous amount of time trying to get one. A 3-year investigation.

And what did he end up doing?

Fitzgerald ended up prosecuting ''Scooter Libby for''—as she says—''wait for it, obstruction of justice. Comey was unconcerned about the jailing of journalists and never threatened to resign over this infringement on First Amendment freedoms.''

So, since Mueller did not have the moral sense to recuse himself when he was offered this special counsel job because of his close personal relationship with James Comey and who he has hired since then, it is very clear, the President is not going to be able to fire him, because there would be such screaming about the Saturday Night Massacre. Mueller knew that, and this is part of his vindictiveness. When it became clear from Comey's testimony that there was no conclusion with Russia by President Trump, then he leaks out that: Oh, I am investigating the President for obstruction of justice.

Why would he do that?

Because by leaking out that he was now investigating the President—if the President fired him after he leaks out that he is investigating the President, then you would have the allegations of the Saturday Night Massacre and all this kind of stuff.

So the only way forward is the appointment by President Donald Trump of an independent counsel that is truly independent.

Mr. Speaker, we do not need someone who has been contributing to Hillary Clinton or to Barack Obama or to any major Democrat or to any major Republican. We need somebody that is going to be a fair arbiter in this pursuit of justice so that he can investigate Mueller fairly and impartially. And the relationship, whether Comey and Mueller consulted, as they did on so many things, like his Senate testimony, about some of the things—well, like the leak that Comey testified to that appears, potentially, to have been a crime.

We need to know what Mueller knew. Obviously, Robert Mueller is not going to resign, so the President couldn't very well fire him. But we have got to get to the bottom and find out what really happened so that justice is done.

The projecting by one group of people on the Republican Party conduct they engaged in and projecting it on the Republican Party as if it was they that did what this group did, it is time to have all this investigated. We are not going to get it with Mueller, a dear friend of Comey. It is time to have a true independent counsel.

The only one way we can do that appropriately is if President Trump finds somebody truly independent, truly not a political animal, who can investigate. And that is not Rosenstein, that is for sure, as well. Then we can get to the bottom and see that justice is done.

So here is our work. Let's stay here and work until we get ObamaCare repealed, tax reform passed and signed into law, and let's encourage the President to appoint independent counsel so that we can finally see justice in this case, where currently all we have is what one friend referred to as a big fraternity party among the Muellers and Comeys and their buddies in that fraternity.

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

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2810, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 23, GAINING RESPONSIBILITY ON WATER ACT OF 2017

Mr. BYRNE, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115–212) on the resolution (H. Res. 431) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2810) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 23) to provide drought relief in the State of California, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

HOUSE BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT

The President notified the Clerk of the House that on the following dates he had approved and signed bills and joint resolutions of the following titles:

April 3, 2017:

H.J. Res. 69. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Department of the Interior relating to ''Non-Subsistence Take of Wildlife, and Public Participation and Closure Procedures, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska''.

H.J. Res. 83. A joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to ''Clarification of Employer's Continuing Obligation to Make and Maintain an Accurate Record of Each Recordable Injury and Illness''.

H.R. 1228. An Act to provide for the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to replace members whose terms expire during 2017, and for other purposes.

April 13, 2017:

H.J. Res. 43. A joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients.

H.J. Res. 67. A joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees.

April 18, 2017:

H.R. 353. An Act to improve the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's weather research through a focused program of investment on affordable and attainable