

last few days. The President of the United States fired the man in charge of an active investigation about the President and his campaign ties to Russia. The truth is, the dismissal of Director Comey is part of a much longer pattern of this administration's interfering with or removing the people who are in a position to conduct an independent investigation of the President and his administration.

The administration requested that the chairmen of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees help them beat back reports in the press about the Russia probe. The administration picked this Attorney General—a very close political ally, then-Senator Jeff Sessions—to lead a Justice Department that was supposed to independently conduct this investigation.

Attorney General Sessions, of course, has since had to recuse himself from the Russia investigation after he misled Congress about his meetings with the Russian Ambassador.

The administration is not shy about removing independent prosecutors and law enforcement officers from their posts if they are simply doing something the President doesn't like, even if it is required by law. They fired Sally Yates. They fired Preet Bharara. They fired more than 40 U.S. attorneys across the country. Now they have fired Director Comey.

This is about more than just Mr. Comey. This is about a pattern of events that casts tremendous doubt on whether this administration has any interest in allowing the Russia investigation or any other investigation that could be politically damaging to them to proceed unimpeded. This is about one of the most sacred things we believe in as Americans, the rule of law—the rule of law being threatened here.

We in Congress, in both parties, should have one overarching goal: to get the full unvarnished truth. That means getting to the bottom of the events that led to Mr. Comey's dismissal and making sure the Russia investigation is conducted impartially. Here in Congress, the Senate Intelligence Committee is doing its investigation in a bipartisan way, but the executive branch investigation has been compromised.

Attorney General Sessions, who had to recuse himself from the Russia investigation, played a significant role in firing the man who was leading it. Not only that, but the Attorney General is now reportedly leading a search to replace Mr. Comey. He is helping select the next FBI Director, who will be in charge of an investigation he cannot oversee—what an irony.

This Attorney General shouldn't be anywhere near the hiring process of the next FBI Director. His role will jaundice the entire process, if it hasn't already.

In order to ensure the American people can have faith in the impartiality of the investigation, it must be con-

ducted far from the reach of the White House. It is the overwhelming view of my caucus that a special prosecutor should now be appointed to conduct the investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

This special prosecutor should be appointed by the highest ranking civil servant at the Justice Department. Mr. Rosenstein and other political appointees should not be the ones who decide on a special prosecutor, lest that decision be seen as influenced, or worse, made at the direction of the administration. I thank my colleague from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, for speaking so eloquently on this proposal.

In addition, there are several things that should happen here on Capitol Hill that will help get us to the bottom of the events this week.

First, Mr. Comey should testify before Congress. There are so many questions that only Mr. Comey can answer. So I applaud Senators BURR and WARNER for inviting him to appear before the Intelligence Committee next week. It was the right thing to do. We ought to hear from Mr. Comey, and I urge Mr. Comey to come and tell the whole story.

Second, Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should make themselves available to Congress. I am renewing my request of the majority leader to call an all-Senators briefing where they can answer the questions swirling about from Tuesday night's firing. Attorney General Sessions and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should appear separately and partially in a classified setting if necessary, but they must come.

Mr. Rosenstein has played a central role in all of these events. He could help clear up questions about where the decision to fire Mr. Comey originated. So later today, separate and apart from my request that he come before the Senate, I will be sending Mr. Rosenstein a letter with a list of questions for him to answer publicly. America needs to hear them. Many Democrats voted for Mr. Rosenstein a few weeks ago because he had a reputation for integrity. He assured us he would be an independent force inside the Department of Justice, and 94 Senators voted for him, but the events of last week have made many of us question that belief. He owes it to the Senate. He owes it to the people he supervises in the Justice Department and in the FBI, and he owes it to the American people to provide some answers.

In sum, we demand the appointment of a special prosecutor by a non-political appointee at the Department of Justice. We want to hear from Mr. Comey. We are asking the majority leader to hold separate all-Senators briefings with the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General. This would help us get a hold on what happened, would explain why, and would help guide us in what to do next because this investigation will not die no

matter who wants it to. I sincerely hope we will get an answer from the majority leader by the end of the day. This is a very serious matter.

Right now, there are two different stories coming out of the White House. Some are saying the decision to fire Mr. Comey came directly from the White House; others, including the Vice President, have said it came from the Department of Justice—specifically, Mr. Rosenstein and Mr. Sessions. We need to resolve these two story lines on something as important as this. We need the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So I hope my Republican colleagues see the wisdom and value in our request and respond appropriately by the end of the day.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, just a word on the majority's use of the Congressional Review Act. The window for using the CRA is closing this week. I heard the majority leader touting the 13 CRAs the majority passed this year. I want to make two points.

First, despite what the majority leader and the President claim, these CRAs are not a huge accomplishment. They simply overturned rules passed at the very end of the Obama administration. They hardly constitute a legislative agenda. In fact, the use of the CRA shows just how little this majority and this President have been able to accomplish in the first 100-plus days. The fact that they are bragging about these highlights how little else they have accomplished legislatively.

Second, the CRAs are designed to help special interests against the interests of working Americans, belying all the promises President Trump made when he campaigned. Let me give some examples. One of them is on foreign oil bribery. One of them is on a retirement rule. One of them is on stream protections. One is on mentally-ill access to guns. In each of these, it is a narrow special interest who pushed it, not a demand from the American people. Which Americans say "Make it OK for our companies to bribe foreign oil companies or pollute our streams" or "Give the mentally ill access to guns"? These are narrow interests in each case.

Let's be very clear about this. The CRAs Republicans passed are not rolling back burdensome regulations. Oh, no. They are giveaways to Big Oil, Big Gas, Big Coal, Big Mining, and wealthy special interests.

The most indefensible one of many is the one on a retirement rule. If localities or States want to set up systems whereby working people want to put money away for their retirement, why not? It doesn't hurt anybody. It doesn't require anybody to do anything. And these days where fewer and fewer Americans have pensions from their companies, it is what is needed. But

some banks didn't want competition. They didn't want it shown that maybe the cities or the States could run these retirement systems more cheaply and take less money out of the average American's pocket. So we undid this rule. I don't think a single average constituent in any part of America wanted this rule undone, just the big banks—some of them, not all of them. That is the kind of thing my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and President Trump are bragging about. It is nothing to brag about.

Let's be very clear about this. These are not the priorities the American people voted for in November, where a substantial majority of Americans said in exit polls that the economy was rigged against them. These CRAs rig the game even further for the wealthy special interests and are nothing to brag about or write home about.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Lighthizer nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomi-

nation of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Rounds, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Thad Cochran, Luther Strange, John Thune, Richard C. Shelby, John Hoeven, John Boozman, Rob Portman, Jerry Moran, David Perdue.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 81, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 126 Ex.]
YEAS—81

Alexander	Enzi	Menendez
Baldwin	Ernst	Moran
Barrasso	Feinstein	Murphy
Bennet	Fischer	Murray
Blunt	Flake	Nelson
Booker	Franken	Paul
Boozman	Gardner	Perdue
Brown	Graham	Peters
Burr	Grassley	Portman
Cantwell	Hassan	Risch
Cardin	Hatch	Roberts
Carper	Heitkamp	Rounds
Casey	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hirono	Scott
Cochran	Hoeven	Shaheen
Collins	Inhofe	Shelby
Coons	Isakson	Stabenow
Corker	Johnson	Strange
Cornyn	Kaine	Tester
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Thune
Cotton	King	Tillis
Crapo	Klobuchar	Toomey
Cruz	Lankford	Van Hollen
Daines	Leahy	Warner
Donnelly	Lee	Wicker
Duckworth	Manchin	Wyden
Durbin	McConnell	Young

NAYS—15

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gillibrand	Merkley	Schumer
Harris	Reed	Udall
Heinrich	Sanders	Warren
Markley	Sasse	Whitehouse

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
McCaskill	Sullivan

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 81, the nays are 15.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Wyoming.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the past few months, Congress has passed 14 different resolutions that are going to save the American people money and are going to make it a lot easier for our economy to grow. There have been 14 times since February that we have struck down unnecessary, burdensome, and costly regulations.

These were called "midnight regulations" because they came at the end of the Obama administration. Some came out, actually, after the Presidential election had been completed. The outcome was known, and, still, the outgoing administration tried to continue with what President Obama's Chief of Staff at one time called "audacious executive actions." Half of these 14 regulations—half of them—were actually put in place after the November Presidential election.

When one thinks about the election last year in November, President Obama said time and again during the campaign that his agenda was on the ballot. The American people rejected that agenda, and the President dumped these new rules on the American people as a parting shot. We wiped out 14 of these regulations—wiped them off the books.

In one resolution, we rolled back an important part of President Obama's war on coal. That was the so-called stream buffer rule. It was designed to shut down a lot of the surface coal mining in this country. It would have destroyed up to one-third of coal mining jobs in America. So we passed a resolution that will protect coal mining jobs and protect American energy independence.

There was another resolution we passed that restores the role of local land managers in deciding how best to use Federal land. Before the Obama administration, the local experts were the ones who would help decide how Federal land could be used in so many areas around the country. These are the people on the ground. They are the ones who know best what works there. They are the ones with the best sense of how to balance all of the different ways that land can be used. That could be things like recreation, energy production, and grazing.

Well, the Obama administration said it wasn't interested in hearing from the local experts anymore. It decided to put the decisions—all of those decisions—in the hands of unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats in Washington, DC. So Congress passed a resolution that says these are decisions that affect local communities and those communities should have the say—and a significant amount of say—in how decisions get made.

When we look at these 14 resolutions all together, they will save Americans over \$4 billion and more than 4 million hours of paperwork because not only are the regulations expensive, they are burdensome and time-consuming.