

The USTR should be someone who negotiates on behalf of the American worker and advances labor and environmental protections, and the USTR should be someone who works to enforce agreements. While I don't agree with everything in Mr. Lighthizer's resume, his record suggests that he will be a USTR who will approach trade policies in the ways I have outlined. I hope the approach he takes going forward will reflect the positions he has taken in the past. I expect him to ask: Does it improve worker wages? And does it add American jobs?

I believe that Mr. Lighthizer will bring fresh eyes to trade policy. I hope that he will focus on increasing transparency at the USTR. I hope that he will stand up for worker rights, both domestically and internationally. I hope that Mr. Lighthizer will work to enforce trade policies that protect the environment.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRADE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I come from a State that in some ways is very similar to yours, the State of Kansas. You get to see firsthand the impact of trade and exports on the people, on jobs, and on the economic opportunity of my communities. Our State economy relies on our ability to sell the products we grow and manufacture to people around the globe.

Strengthening our trade relationships and expanding market access for exports abroad creates a greater opportunity for Kansans today and those who follow us. One of my goals has always been to make certain that communities across Kansas remain a place in which the young men and women who grow up there find it to be a place to raise their families. Our ability to do that, especially in a small, rural community with agriculture and agricultural exports, is so important. It is a way that we can really put America first.

If our goal is to have an America that has strength and prosperity, we ought to continue to focus on improving our Nation's economy. That is one of the things that I appreciate—we seem to be focused in such a significant way on our ability to grow an economy. I think we are poised for much greater things economically.

"Economics" may sound like just one of those words, but what that means is more jobs, better jobs, more secure jobs, jobs for our children so that maybe they can pay back their student loans. This country desperately needs the jobs in the commu-

nities across Kansas and around the country, and it is really what we call the American dream.

Trade, including our ability to sell the food and fiber we grow in our State, is a key part that drives our economy forward. Almost half of the wheat grown in Kansas is exported to foreign markets. What that means is, if you weren't doing that, nearly half of the acres planted in our State would be idle. That means the communities those farmers and ranchers live in and around would have half of the amount of economic activity that currently is occurring. American ranchers ship over 1 million metric tons of beef to consumers abroad. Thousands of acres of corn, sorghum, and soybeans being planted this spring across Kansas and the Nation will ultimately be exported.

Approximately 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside America's borders. To reach those consumers, our Nation must produce a trade policy that grows the existing export markets while continuously building and developing new ones. Without export markets, both production and prices would fall for farmers and ranchers, and rural communities supported by agriculture would disappear. The revenue generated by exports not only keeps family farmers and ranchers afloat, it drives rural economies and supports small businesses.

The aerospace industry, which is so important in Kansas, also relies on an integrated supply chain and strong trade policy. Wichita, KS—appropriately labeled the "Air Capital of the World"—manufactures more than half of the world's general aviation light aircraft and business jets. Without trade, aerospace and manufacturing facilities in Wichita and surrounding areas and Kansas City and surrounding areas would not exist and workers in those factories would be left without job opportunities.

It is critical that we protect these jobs, many of which depend upon the United States having a strong economic relationship with Canada and Mexico. The North America Free-Trade Agreement, which went into effect in 1994, plays a significant role in supporting trade with those two neighboring nations.

Of course, the world and technology have changed since 1994 when that agreement was entered into. There are areas of the agreement that can be improved and modernized. Many of those changes have been discussed and are issues that the United States, Canada, and Mexico agreed to during TPP negotiations, such as strengthening our intellectual property rights and new provisions for e-commerce.

If we work collaboratively with Mexico and Canada to address the issues with NAFTA, including the issues on which we strongly disagree, I am confident we can improve the agreement for all parties. But efforts to pull out of NAFTA completely or to weaken our trading relationship with Canada and

Mexico during renegotiations would cause significant damage to the American economy. We must have willing negotiators sitting across the table when discussing NAFTA, and that starts with treating our neighbors as trade partners and as friends. We need to treat these folks as friends, and we need to seize the opportunities we have.

Working together to improve NAFTA or building economic relations with other trading partners does not mean America should take a step back from enforcing the current rules. Oftentimes in the past, we have been too focused on striking trade deals and selling them to the public, but we haven't done enough to make sure other countries are playing by the rules that are negotiated. Nontariff barriers and unfair trading practices by foreign countries harm our producers, workers, and consumers.

We must make certain American producers are competing on a level playing field in a global market and that our jobs and wages are not being undermined by other countries' efforts to distort trade policies and trade agreements.

Many Americans have lost confidence in trade agreements, and I believe that is partly because the benefits of trade agreements have been oversold, while the enforcement of unfair trade practices have been insufficient. In promoting agreements, leaders had set expectations for increased jobs, higher wages, growth in exports, and many other metrics that were impossible to meet. When these exaggerated promises did not come to fruition, many people lost confidence in those trade agreements.

America should strengthen our commitment to holding other countries accountable in order to inspire greater confidence from the American public in our Nation's ability to reach a trade agreement that benefits us all.

Weakening our trade relations will cause Kansans to lose jobs. Farmers and ranchers will no longer be able to pursue their careers and lifestyle. But with strong leadership and smart negotiating, I am convinced that America can improve our trade relationships in the world and continue to build on the economic successes we have today.

A robust U.S. economy that provides market opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers, and job prospects for workers is an essential pillar of America's strength and well-being. Strong trade relationships, particularly with Canada and Mexico, are primary drivers of our Nation's economy. We must protect those relationships and carefully consider changes in our approach to trade to be certain that Americans continue to benefit from economic opportunities that are created by a strong trade policy.

Madam President, our relationships with Mexico and Canada are important and in many ways determine the economic future of the people of my State at home.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, these are not ordinary times. It is not ordinary for a winning Presidential campaign to be under investigation for collusion with a foreign adversary to influence our 2016 election and undermine our democracy. It isn't ordinary for a President to fire the man responsible for conducting this very investigation. It isn't ordinary for a President whose campaign is under investigation for having ties to Russia to hold an Oval Office meeting with that country's Foreign Minister and only invite the Russian press. This meeting came only a day after firing the person in charge of the Russia-Trump investigation. Yet, here we are. The question is, What should we do next?

The events of the past 48 hours have been shocking and concerning. Firing FBI Director James Comey in this manner, under this pretext, and at this time is a total disservice to the American people.

President Trump hopes the American people will believe he fired Director Comey because of how he treated Hillary Clinton during the Presidential campaign. President Trump hopes, as his Deputy Press Secretary said on Tuesday night, that the American people think it is "time to move on." President Trump hopes his attempts to distract us from the importance of getting to the bottom of the Russia-Trump matter will succeed. President Trump's hopes are misplaced. If anything, President Trump's firing of Director Comey has resulted in an increased concern about the Trump team's connections to Russian interference with our 2016 Presidential election.

The country is asking, Mr. President, what do you have to hide?

We are learning practically on an hourly basis about how the President made this decision to fire Director Comey and why. This information does not square with the official line coming from the White House, which also changes.

Most recently, the Washington Post reported that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein threatened to resign after the White House misrepresented his role in the decision to fire Director Comey. CNN reported that President Trump fired Director Comey because he would not provide "assurance of personal loyalty." Both CNN and the Wall Street Journal reported that the decision to fire Director Comey came after the FBI's investigation was accelerating. All of this information has emerged in the last 48 hours or so.

This kind of Presidential interference, through the firing of the FBI Director during an ongoing investigation, is unprecedented, suspicious, and deeply concerning. These revelations and those that are sure to come further argue in favor of appointing a special prosecutor to fully investigate the Russia-Trump matter. A special prosecutor with full autonomy can follow the evidence wherever it leads and prosecute as appropriate.

I call upon Republicans of conscience to stand up and join the call for a special prosecutor.

Over the past few days, a number of my Republican colleagues have spoken out against the way the President had fired James Comey. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Senators MCCAIN, SASSE, FLAKE, BURR, KENNEDY, BOOZMAN, and CORKER for speaking out. I hope, as more information about President Trump's decision to fire Director Comey emerges, our Republican colleagues will join in the call for a special prosecutor.

Leader MCCONNELL argued yesterday that appointing a special prosecutor would disrupt the ongoing work of the Senate committees that are conducting their own investigations. I disagree. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Judiciary Committee have important oversight responsibilities regarding the Russia-Trump matter, but neither committee has the power to convene a grand jury or prosecute any crimes that may have been committed. Therefore, I reiterate the need for a special prosecutor with the mandate and authority to follow the facts wherever they lead—free of political considerations.

In the coming weeks, President Trump will nominate a new Director for the FBI. This person must be above reproach and be someone whose independent judgment can earn the country's confidence. I have been disturbed by some of the names being floated as potential replacements, names like Chris Christie and Rudy Giuliani. We cannot allow President Trump to appoint one of his buddies to oversee the Russia-Trump investigation or to lead the FBI.

The investigation into the Russia-Trump matter cannot and should not be a partisan issue. We should all care that a foreign government has sought to interfere with our elections and with our democracy. This is not just about the election. This is really about protecting our democracy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, there is a Chinese curse that reads: "May you live in interesting times."

To call the times that we find ourselves in right now "interesting" would be certainly an understatement. The fact is, we find ourselves and our country in a moment that is profoundly testing the rule of law here in America, profoundly testing the strength of our democratic institutions. We have a President who has now engaged in a pattern of removing individuals from office who are executing their responsibilities under the law.

First, on January 30, just 11 days into the Trump administration, it was Sally Yates, the Acting Attorney General, who warned the administration that Michael Flynn had been compromised by his connections to Russia—an incredibly responsible act for her to take, but she was fired.

On March 10, it was Preet Bharara, the U.S. attorney in New York, who was reportedly investigating whether Secretary Price had profited from his position in Congress. He had been told he would be retained by this administration when suddenly he was fired.

Then this week, Tuesday, the President fired James Comey, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; James Comey, who was leading the FBI's investigation into the possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia in the Presidential election and who was scheduled to testify before the U.S. Senate this week; James Comey, who had just recently asked for more funding and resources in order to appropriately and substantially investigate Russian interference in our elections and possible connections to the Trump campaign; James Comey, whose investigation just handed down its first round of subpoenas.

The firing of James Comey has more than a passing resemblance to Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre, the infamous incident in October of 1973, when President Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire the special prosecutor who was investigating Watergate. Nixon wanted to derail that investigation. The Attorney General, Elliott Richardson, refused to do so and resigned. His deputy, William French Smith, refused to do so and resigned.

Day by day, we have seen more connections, bits and pieces, come to light—conversations involving Michael Flynn, former campaign manager Paul Manafort, Carter Page, and Attorney General Sessions.

The President insists there is no "there" there, but we have seen a pattern of conversations that we don't fully understand. Was there coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians to interfere in the U.S. Presidential election? Was there collaboration? We don't know. We know there were a lot of conversations, but what was the substance of those conversations? And who instructed those meetings to take place? What is the full pattern of these events?

It is important that we get to the bottom of it because what every American understands is, if you conspire