

street, whether it is preventing extremist groups from recruiting people in our neighborhoods, whether it is fighting the opioid abuse epidemic, whether it is simply giving a kid a second chance—and they do those kinds of things all the time.

Law enforcement officers are doing some of the hardest and most important work out there. We owe our safety to them, and we thank them for their remarkable service.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, in conclusion, I thank my colleagues, Senators KLOBUCHAR, GRASSLEY, CORNYN, and BLUNT, for joining us today in a colloquy on the floor. It is a small but important gesture of bipartisan support, sustained and long-lasting bipartisan support for the community of law enforcement that serves each of us and our communities every day.

I wish to yield to my friend Senator BLUNT for his closing remarks.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I thank Senator COONS.

The pieces of legislation to support officers and their families are wide ranging, even legislation to be voted out of the Judiciary Committee today. It was exactly 1 year ago today that President Obama signed the Fallen Heroes Flag Act into law. This is a bill that I introduced along with my colleague that provides that American flags be flown over the U.S. Capitol and given to the families of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and other first responders who lose their lives in the line of duty.

As Senator KLOBUCHAR so well pointed out, these are the people who run to danger when the rest of us are able to head the other way. We are grateful to them and grateful for them.

Mr. President, I think we will yield the floor with great appreciation for the law enforcement officers who are being recognized this week. There are still too many names that Senator GRASSLEY mentioned who will be added to the over 20,000 officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty since the country was founded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time from 2:15 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. today be equally divided in the usual form; and that at 5:15 p.m., all postcloture time be expired and the Senate vote on the Rosen nomination; that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume consideration of the Brand nomination; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote on the Brand nomination occur at 12 noon on Wednesday, May 17; and that if cloture is invoked, the time count as if it were invoked at 1 a.m. on Wednesday; finally, that if cloture is invoked on the Brand nomination, the cloture vote on the Branstad nomina-

tion occur following disposition of the Brand nomination; and that if cloture is not invoked on the Brand nomination, the cloture vote on the Branstad nomination occur immediately following the failed cloture vote.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from New Mexico.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, it is an honor to join my colleagues. I know Senator COONS and others have come together as a bipartisan group to talk about fallen police officers.

It is with my greatest respect and deepest sympathy that today I honor five fallen New Mexico heroes on the floor of the Senate. These five brave men were police officers who died in the line of duty. Police officers who sacrificed their lives in service to the people of their communities and our State.

Police Officer Jose Ismael Chavez was a member of the Hatch Police Department. While conducting a traffic stop in Hatch on August 12, 2016, one passenger exited and opened fire on Officer Chavez. Officer Chavez is survived by his wife and two children.

Secondly, Police Officer Clint E. Corvinus of Alamogordo was part of the Alamogordo Police Department and was shot while pursuing a suspected felon on foot in Alamogordo on September 2, 2016. Officer Corvinus is survived by his daughter.

Deputy Sheriff Ryan Sean Thomas of the Valencia County Sheriff's Department was responding to a call for service on December 6, 2016, when his patrol car left the roadway between Los Lunas and Belen, and overturned. He was ejected from his car. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and a baby boy after he died.

Sheriff Steven Lawrence Ackerman, of the Lea County Sheriff's Department, was killed in a single vehicle crash near Encino on January 17, 2017. Sheriff Ackerman had served with the Lea County Sheriff's Department for 14 years and previously with the Lea County Detention Center for 12 years. He is survived by his wife, daughter, son, and grandson.

Police Officer Houston James Largo, of the Navajo Tribal Police, was shot while responding to a domestic violence call near Prewitt, NM. He passed away the next day on March 12, 2017. He was only 27 years old.

There are no words to express the sadness or the gratitude we all feel toward these New Mexico officers and their families and toward all police officers who are killed in the line of duty. We honor them all this Police Week and by legislation we introduced last week in the Senate to extend flying the flag half-staff for the first responders. We will push to give first responders the respect they are owed by passing the Honoring Hometown Heroes Act.

Every day, tens of thousands of policemen and policewomen serve our

communities in myriad ways, from tracking down violent criminals to finding shelter for homeless persons. The police and their families deserve our respect, gratitude, and support every day.

I thank you, Officer Chavez, Officer Corvinus, Deputy Sheriff Thomas, Sheriff Ackerman, and Officer Largo, from the bottom of my heart and with sincere appreciation.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, the White House and President Trump face yet another crisis—perhaps the biggest in his chaotic term so far. According to the Washington Post and other outlets, President Trump disclosed highly classified information to the Russian Foreign Minister and Russian Ambassador to the United States in the Oval Office last week. This is utterly stunning.

Congress needs to find out exactly what happened, on a bipartisan basis, but we can tell already that President Trump's behavior in this incident is very dangerous. It is dangerous to our national security institutions, dangerous to the men and women overseas who are serving their country and risking their lives. Many other outlets have confirmed the Washington Post article, and they have cited several sources.

Assuming it is true, the President has endangered our relationship with a partner who gave our security agencies this information. That has ripple effects that will risk similar relationships with other countries. It also could put our sources at risk.

While his national security team denied the news reports this morning, the President was on Twitter contradicting them. He claims he has the right to tell the Russian Foreign Minister anything he wants. I can't think of any parallel in history for the President's dangerous lack of discretion or his dangerous misunderstanding of how to handle classified national security information.

As the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator CORKER put it this way: The White House is in a “downward spiral,” and he said it needs to get it “under control.” Senator CORKER is a senior Republican. I know the Presiding Officer and I serve with him on the Foreign Relations Committee. He is a man I respect very much, and I hope the White House will listen to Chairman CORKER.

It is very strange that the President chose to meet with the Russian Ambassador at the center of the Trump campaign's contacts to Russia or to allow the Russian press with their electronic equipment into the meeting at the Oval Office, but let's put these strange and dangerous events in the context of the last several weeks and months.

America's intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia interfered in the U.S. election and that they favored the Trump campaign. Now the President is hosting senior Russian officials in the Oval Office and disclosing highly classified information—information that

puts future intelligence and maybe lives at risk.

The day after he fired the FBI Director, President Trump admitted on camera to NBC News that he did so in part because he is frustrated at the FBI's investigation into Russian interference and potential Trump campaign contacts. Congress must get to the bottom of this. Republicans and Democrats must come together for real oversight. Based on what I see now, President Trump's actions call into question his fitness for office and further underscore the imperative for independent investigations.

It is not an exaggeration to say our Nation faces a constitutional crisis. Our Constitution is based on rule of law. In the United States, no man or woman is above the law, not even the President of the United States. Our constitutional democracy is remarkable for many reasons. One is that Presidential action has threatened the fabric of our democracy only a few times in our history. President Nixon's Watergate scandal was one of them, and I believe we face another one today.

President Trump's firing of the FBI Director in the middle of an investigation into the campaign that put him in office and the President's bizarre behavior since should concern all Americans regardless of party. The only rational explanation is that he has something to hide, that he wants to disrupt the investigation into Russia's interference in our election. What possible reason could the President have for wanting to hinder this investigation? It should be his highest priority to ensure it never happens again. Instead he calls it "fake news."

Now, here is what we know. Early in the new administration, the White House Chief of Staff asked the FBI to publicly disavow reports that the FBI was investigating Trump campaign ties to Russia. This attempted political interference was wrong.

The White House next set its sight on House Intelligence Committee chair DEVIN NUNES, who was investigating Russian interference in the election. Representative NUNES made midnight runs to the White House to view documents that he said validated the President's claims that he was wiretapped.

While the information did not ultimately prove that, Representative NUNES still chose to go public with classified information before discussing it with his committee. This was circus-like behavior, which ultimately forced Representative NUNES to recuse himself from the committee's investigation. But it was also serious. It showed that the White House was willing to go to great lengths to interfere with the House investigation into the President.

Next, the President fired Acting Attorney General Sally Yates. At the time, he claimed it was for refusing to defend his Executive order barring Muslims from the country. In the end, her analysis was correct. The Federal

courts found the order to be unconstitutional. We now know that Ms. Yates was fired just days after notifying the White House that then-National Security Advisor Flynn had lied about his conversations with the Russian Ambassador.

She had told the White House that Flynn's own conduct "in and of itself was concerning." She warned that the President's chief advisor on matters of national security was susceptible to blackmail by Russia. It still took the President 18 days to fire Flynn. As Ms. Yates put it, "to state the obvious, you don't want your national security advisor compromised with the Russians."

Now, the President has fired FBI Director James Comey. It defies reason to believe that President Trump fired Mr. Comey because he was too hard on Secretary Clinton. We give the FBI Director a 10-year term so that he or she can do the job free from political interference and follow any investigation wherever it may lead, even into the Oval Office. A deluge of evidence has pointed to the conclusion that the President fired Director Comey for similar reasons as Sally Yates—because he was unhappy with the FBI probe of Russian election interference and possible ties to the Trump campaign.

It has been reported that Director Comey had sought additional resources for the investigation and was receiving daily briefings on the investigation days before he was fired. The U.S. attorney's office in Virginia had also issued grand jury subpoenas to persons with knowledge of Flynn's ties with Russia and Turkey. Well-sourced media reports say the President had become increasingly angry with Director Comey's public statements about the FBI's investigation of him and because Mr. Comey would not confirm the President's baseless claims that the President Obama administration wiretapped Trump Tower.

The President understood that Director Comey would not do his bidding and so he fired him. Still, the White House has flatly lied about the circumstances of Mr. Comey's dismissal. Numerous White House officials, including the Vice President himself, said the decision was at the recommendation of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. They have said this publicly on the record and on camera.

But President Trump himself contradicted them. He said again on camera that he had already decided to fire Director Comey before receiving the Deputy Attorney General's recommendation. He made clear that he was frustrated with the continuing counter-intelligence probe into Russia's election influence. He was upset with Mr. Comey's testimony before Congress.

The White House also claimed that Director Comey had lost confidence at the FBI. But in a public hearing last week, my colleague and Senator from New Mexico, Mr. HEINRICH, asked the

FBI's Acting Director if that was true, and the Acting Director strongly denied it. It has been well reported that the Deputy Attorney General threatened to resign based on the White House claims that Mr. Rosenstein advocated for firing Director Comey.

It seems clear that he was told to draft the cover story for the real reason. His memo was short and is dated the same day as the firing.

Now, on what may be the worst development so far, the President of the United States is threatening on Twitter to release "tapes" of Mr. Comey. He is implying, not confirming, that he has tapes of their conversations and that he will release them if Mr. Comey talks to the press and the public.

Mr. Comey knows he is well within his rights to speak publicly as long as he does not reveal classified information. The President's comment is another example of interference. A sitting President is seeking to pressure a fired FBI Director against speaking out publicly, a man who is likely to be a witness before Congress.

Mr. Comey reportedly would like to testify in an open hearing. Apparently, he doesn't have anything to hide. We need to hear his testimony as soon as possible. Let's find out if President Trump demanded the FBI Director's loyalty. If the President does have tapes of their conversations, he should release them, or we need to subpoena them. But let's get to the bottom of this.

At this point, there is more than probable cause to believe that the President is attempting to obstruct the FBI and congressional investigations. President Trump seems to put himself above the law. Firing the FBI Director and the Acting Attorney General and interfering with a congressional investigation are actions of an autocrat. As a former assistant U.S. attorney and attorney general for New Mexico, I have some experience with investigations. When someone interferes with ongoing investigations, it seems clear that they have something to hide. That is not the behavior of an innocent person.

Make no mistake, Russia's interference in our democratic process is an attack upon our Nation. If the President or his associates colluded in any way with Russia in this attack, it would represent the most serious betrayal of our Nation by a President. While there are rarely exact parallels in history, the parallel between Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre and President Trump's Tuesday Night Massacre is hard to ignore.

Nixon's firing of the man heading the investigation into his actions led to his impeachment and resignation. Recall that the first article of impeachment was obstruction of justice. At that point in our history, both Congress and the Supreme Court stood resolute that the President was not above the law. Congress must again stand resolute that the President is not above the

law. It is well past time for Congress to appoint an independent commission like the 9/11 commission.

It must investigate every aspect of Russia's interference with our election and recommend steps to ensure it never happens again. It must investigate whether Candidate Trump or his associates colluded with Russia to interfere with our Presidential election. Congress must do so swiftly and must give the commission sufficient resources to do the job.

The Attorney General is compromised. He has recused himself from any investigation into the Trump campaign. But I believe he violated the terms of his recusal when he weighed in on Director Comey's termination. Several of us will be sending a letter this week to the Justice Department inspector general asking him to investigate this specific issue.

Now the President is about to nominate a new FBI Director, presumably one he believes will be less independent than Director Comey, one who will not pursue the Russia investigation if it points to his campaign.

Given these circumstances, Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein must appoint a special counsel to conduct a counterintelligence investigation into Russia's role in our election and, if necessary, a criminal investigation into the conduct of the Trump campaign and the administration. A special counsel must be appointed before we consider a new nominee for FBI Director.

That nominee needs to be closely scrutinized by the Senate. We need a Director who is nonpartisan and has a law enforcement background. This person will be responsible for restoring Americans' confidence in the FBI and ensuring that he or she does not pledge loyalty to the President but pledges loyalty to the Constitution.

The majority in Congress must listen to the American public, must follow the lessons of history, and must protect the rule of law and our Constitution.

In the United States, no person is above the law, not even—and especially—the President of the United States. In my career in Congress, I have always believed you put the country first. Party comes last. In their hearts, I know my Republican friends and colleagues feel the same. Congress and the Senate need to fulfill the roles the Founding Fathers envisioned: When the executive branch is moving outside the bounds of the rule of law, we must rein it in.

It is well past time for action.

RECESS

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5:15 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Utah.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, peace and order are the indispensable pillars of a stable society. They grant us security in our daily lives, trust in our communities, and faith in our democratic institutions. Where peace and order reign, so too does society thrive and prosper, but none of that is possible without our Nation's 700,000 men and women in blue.

Each and every day, these brave sons and daughters—brave souls—stand up for all of us. Each and every day, they stand guard, ready to do justice or risk harm—all on our behalf. So today I rise on behalf of a grateful Nation to recognize them. Their performance is exceptional, and their sacrifice is immense.

Far too often, we take our police officers for granted. Far too often, we forget how hard it is to win and how easy it is to lose the peace and order that we all enjoy, but our police officers never forget. They are always at the ready. As we honor them this week, we remember that the question is not “What causes violence or what causes crime?” but rather, “What causes peace, and what causes security?”

The answer is our men and women in blue.

In celebration of our National Police Week, I wish to express my profound appreciation for our Nation's law enforcement community—the courageous men and women who each day put the safety of others before their own. Their success is impossible to fully measure. It cannot be counted in crime statistics or etched into medals. It can only be seen in the peace and order that their sacrifice makes possible.

Therefore, allow me for a moment to speak directly to our police officers.

Trust that your selflessness does not go unseen, that your service does not go unfelt, and that your sacrifice does not go unknown. We appreciate you, we support you, and we honor you. Law enforcement is among the noblest of professions. You are the brave guardians among us who fight for peace and protect the vulnerable from harm. On behalf of a grateful nation, I wish to thank you and your families for bearing the burden, shouldering the sacrifice, and making us all proud.

Let it be known that I proudly back the blue.

This is a critical moment to show the police our support. We live in a time when law enforcement officials are not only underappreciated but often maligned and, quite often, openly disparaged. Day in and day out, they suffer criticism and pressure. This week we let them know of our respect and admiration.

Today, I wish to express my gratitude for our men and women in uni-

form by sharing stories of their heroism. You see, we hear all about police mistakes, and we hear wall-to-wall coverage of the controversies, but we seldom hear about the acts of bravery and professionalism that distinguish our police officers as the finest in the world. In particular, I would like to relate the account of Utahns Bre and Kayli Lasley, two sisters whose lives were saved by an on-duty police officer.

In September 2015, a man armed with a knife climbed through a bedroom window in Bre and Kayli's Salt Lake City apartment. Once inside, he brutally beat both sisters before pulling out a knife and repeatedly stabbing Bre. Just as the attacker raised his knife to Bre's throat, Salt Lake City police officer Ben Hone charged into the room. He told the intruder to drop his knife.

In that critical moment, with lives literally hanging in the balance, Bre remembers:

That's when I saw the officer, and he was our angel . . . I looked at the officer in his eyes, and he was so professional and calm.

When the attacker refused to surrender his weapon, Officer Hone raised his service pistol and fired, killing the armed intruder and saving Bre's life. In that moment, Officer Hone was truly Bre's guardian angel.

She remembers:

When [we] made eye contact, I knew I was safe. It's a miracle that he had so much composure and was able to take that shot.

In recognition of his heroism, Officer Ben Hone was honored by the National Associations of Chiefs of Police and the American Police Hall of Fame as the 2015 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. I think it was an honor richly deserved.

Officer Hone survived that day. For that, we give thanks, but the sad reality is that many lose their lives in the line of duty. So today I wish to honor those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice and paid the highest price that society can ask. Our debt to them will not—indeed, cannot—be repaid.

Among the fallen is Utah Highway Patrol Trooper Eric Ellsworth, who died only a few days after being struck by a car while on duty in Box Elder County. We also mourn the passing of West Valley City police officer Cody Brotherson and Greater Salt Lake Unified Police Department officer Douglas Barney, who were both killed in the line of duty this past year in Utah.

I express my deepest condolences to the families and friends of these brave heroes and the countless others who have experienced similar tragedies.

Although we cannot bring these officers back, we can honor their legacies by committing ourselves to supporting their brothers and sisters in uniform. To that end, I have introduced and co-sponsored a number of bills this Congress that are meant to assist law enforcement as they serve our communities. These bills include the Rapid