

which should definitely be included, I hope Senator McCain's proposal is part of our consideration of Russia-related sanctions as well.

Chairman CORKER, Chairman CRAPO, Ranking Member BROWN, and Ranking Member CARDIN are in ongoing discussions, as are the majority leader and I, about the content of the Russia sanctions and amendment. I am hopeful that we can resolve this issue and vote to advance both measures.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, my friends on the other side of the aisle continue to work on their healthcare bill behind closed doors. They haven't made public a shred of bill text or even considered holding a committee hearing to debate the topic. Yesterday my friend the majority leader filed a motion to bring TrumpCare directly to the floor, skipping the committee process.

This is a party that screamed from the rafters "Read the bill, read the bill" when Democrats were putting together the Affordable Care Act. We spent over a year debating that bill. We tried with a bipartisan group of six to come up with a solution.

Republicans are putting together their bill in secret, with no Democratic input, and then will rush their bill to the floor without a single committee hearing, all in the span of 3 short weeks. This is a bill that will alter one-sixth of the American economy and affect tens of millions of American lives. For many, it will have life-and-death consequences.

The way Republicans are crafting this legislation is pulling the wool over the eyes of the American people on one of the most crucial issues affecting their lives. Why? There is only one explanation: They don't want the American people to see their bill. They don't want to go home to townhall meetings and let people give their opinions. Keep it under wraps, rush it through? There is only one good reason: They are not very proud of the product that they have put together.

The Republicans know that even if they make some changes to the bill that came over from the House—they may increase subsidies a bit or lower the amount of tax breaks they give to millionaires—they will still wind up with a bill that is far worse than the status quo: higher costs, less care. That is because they are working from a fundamentally flawed premise, which is to take support away from healthcare programs like Medicaid to give a tax break to the wealthiest Americans. Senate Republicans can nibble around the edges, but they will not be able to excise the rotten core of their healthcare plan.

The House bill has the support of approximately 18 percent of Americans. A majority of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans don't like it. Don't you get the message, my Republican

friends? We understand the ideologues are telling you that you must repeal. But now that people have actually looked at repeal, they realize that is not the way to go.

The right approach is not to move backward, not to undo all the progress we have made in healthcare over the past 8 years and start from scratch. The American people don't want to go back to the days when an insurance company could discriminate against you because you have a preexisting condition or jack up your rates simply because you are older. That is not the kind of healthcare system the American people want. But that seems to be what our Republican colleagues, in the dark of night, are considering.

The right approach is to keep all the good things in the existing law and work in a bipartisan way to make more progress on lowering costs for consumers and improving the quality of care.

Again, I urge my Republican colleagues to drop their repeal efforts and, instead, work with Democrats on actually improving our healthcare system.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I heard President Trump talk about Democrats being obstructionists yesterday—out in Ohio, Kentucky—about a healthcare bill in which they are not asking for Democratic help or input. They are tied in a knot because their own party can't agree on the tax bill. They again are not asking for Democratic input. They are tied in a knot because their own party can't agree.

Now it looks as if they are doing the same thing on infrastructure. The President is in an "alter reality" world. He blames Democrats, but then his Republican colleagues, often at his instruction, are told not to work on the bill with Democrats. What is going on here?

What the President tweets and talks about at his rallies and what is actually happening are two different worlds—two different worlds. That is no good. It is no good for America, no good for the American people, and, frankly, no good for the President.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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.

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 722, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mrs. FISCHER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 1:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar No. 99, the nomination of Scott Brown to be Ambassador to New Zealand; I further ask that there be 15 minutes of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on confirmation with no intervening action or debate; and that, if confirmed, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I think we all know that former FBI Director Comey just completed his public testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He testified about how President Trump asked him to pledge his loyalty to him personally and how the President asked the FBI to drop the investigation into former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.

We know that last December, Michael Flynn had a discussion with the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Kislyak, about dropping some of the economic sanctions that the United States has imposed on Russia. We know that Michael Flynn subsequently lied about that conversation.

We also know—and former FBI Director Comey discussed it today—that he was fired by President Trump after he refused to pledge his loyalty to the

President and did not drop the investigation into Michael Flynn.

All of that has led to the appointment of a special counsel, Bob Mueller, who has now taken over the executive branch portion of the investigation—an investigation which will likely go on for some time. It is essential for the good of the country that we get to the truth of what happened and get a full accounting and report.

As that investigation proceeds, there is one thing that should not wait, which is really what I want to talk about today. It is the need to take action against Russia for interfering in our democratic process and in our elections. There is no excuse for inaction on that front.

We know that starting in 2015, Russia launched an unprecedented and multifaceted campaign to undermine our elections—a view shared by our entire intelligence community. The Kremlin, according to former Director of National Intelligence Clapper, wanted to “undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process.” This was and remains the unanimous verdict of the intelligence community.

We know that as part of this effort, Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign. We know that Russia’s military intelligence unit, the GRU, then released those emails to the public in increments which were timed to cause turmoil in the American electorate.

Russia paid more than 1,000 people—human trolls—to work out of a facility in Saint Petersburg, Russia. These trolls spent their waking hours creating anti-Clinton fake news reports and disseminating these stories in key states and districts. Russia also used thousands of botnets to echo and amplify these fake news stories.

Russia also targeted the election boards of nearly half the states in our country, successfully infiltrating at least four voter registration databases and gaining access to hundreds of thousands of voter records. They even attempted to infiltrate the Maryland State Board of Elections but were not successful.

My point here today is not to debate the extent to which those Russian actions impacted or did not impact our elections; my point is that there is unanimous agreement that they interfered in our democratic process and that tomorrow they could interfere in it for other purposes and other means. We know they have targeted Senators and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, and we can expect, especially if we do not take action, that these attacks will only grow in pace and sophistication as we head into future elections.

We also know that Russia’s attacks on democratic forms of government reach well beyond our own borders. The intelligence community has warned us that Moscow will apply the lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. Presidential

election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against our allies and their election processes.

In the months following our election, we have seen Russia use a similar disruption strategy to try to undermine moderate candidates throughout Europe, including elections in France and the Netherlands. The Kremlin has also targeted German Chancellor Merkel’s Christian Democratic Party and German State computers.

The goal of these Russian attacks against our democracy and those of our allies is clear. In testimony before Congress this year, experts across the political spectrum have stated that Russia’s goal is straightforward—to undermine confidence in our democratic process, generate doubt about the legitimacy of our elections, and undermine the unity and resolve of the NATO alliance. They want to undermine confidence in democracy and the unity that has been demonstrated through NATO over many decades.

We have seen these unprecedented attacks on our democracy and on the democracies of our allies. The world is looking at us—and I am sure many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are hearing from officials from around the world, including our NATO allies—and is asking: Why is it that the United States has not taken any action to protect its democracy?

Why haven’t we responded to an attack that goes to the heart of our democratic system of government? Why aren’t we working closely and urgently with our allies to prevent these efforts to subvert our elections? Why, instead, are we hearing reports that President Trump is considering giving back the use of properties that the Russians used to spy on us, including one in my State of Maryland, on the Eastern Shore?

Following the overwhelming evidence of Russian interference in our elections, the Obama administration took some very limited measures to punish the Russians for those efforts, including denying them access to those properties. Those sanctions, of course, are on top of the already existing sanctions with respect to Russia’s actions in Ukraine. It is very important that we not talk about unwinding sanctions that have been put in place. That would only reward the Russians for the actions they have taken. Instead, we need to move on and pass legislation to send a clear message that we will sanction Russia for the actions it took to undermine our democratic process right here at home.

As our colleague Senator MCCAIN said yesterday on this floor, “The United States of America needs to send a strong message to Vladimir Putin and any other aggressor that we will not tolerate attacks on our democracy.”

This is the time for all Americans to be patriots and not partisans. So, as the Senate soon considers a measure relating to sanctions on Iran, it is im-

portant that, at the same time, we enact sanctions against Russia for its violations of our democratic process.

I am a cosponsor of a number of bills that have been introduced to impose sanctions on Russia for that interference, and a number of those proposals are now being converted into amendments that will be offered. In addition to those Russian sanctions amendments that have been proposed, I have filed two additional amendments to ensure that we as a nation are thinking strategically about our long-term approach to combatting Russia’s cyber warfare, that we are shoring up our own cyber defenses in advance of our next elections, and that we are not rewarding Putin for these attacks by returning the diplomatic compounds that he used to spy on us.

My amendments would ensure that we have a concerted and unified strategy, developed with our NATO allies and European partners, to counter Russia’s cyber attacks, including its efforts to undermine our democratic elections. We do not currently have any kind of coordinated, developed strategy here in our own country or with our NATO and other allies.

My amendments would require the FBI to establish a high-level cyber security liaison for Presidential campaigns and major national political party committees to ensure that we do not have a repeat of the 2016 elections or at least that we are prepared to confront it. The liaison would share cyber threats as they arise and cyber security protocols with these organizations to stave off cyber attacks.

These amendments would also prevent the executive branch from returning the diplomatic compounds that Russia used to spy on us. They would prevent the return of those compounds until the Secretary of State certifies that Russia is no longer conducting cyber attacks against the United States that threaten our national security, our economy, or our financial stability.

It is outrageous that this administration is actually thinking of rolling back very modest sanctions that were put in place as a result of its attack on our democracy rather than joining us here in Congress on a bipartisan basis to make it clear that one cannot attack our democracy with impunity.

Mr. Comey’s testimony today and the work of the committees here and of Special Counsel Mueller are part of an ongoing effort to determine whether there was any collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign. That investigation will continue. People will investigate whether there are ongoing efforts to derail or disrupt or obstruct those investigations, and that will be a process which will play out over many months. But there is no reason to wait another moment before we take action on the question for which there is no dispute and no disagreement—the fact that the Russians interfered in our elections. Maybe yesterday

they interfered because they had a preference for one candidate. Maybe the next time they will interfere because they have a preference for another candidate or another party. The point is that, on this issue, we need to show unity.

Our allies are asking us: How is it that you can sit on your hands and do nothing in response to what is an obvious attack on your democratic process? How can you even be considering relieving sanctions on Russia after its attack on your democracy?

I hope we will quickly take up legislation to impose sanctions on Russia, to send a strong signal to Russia and to our NATO allies and others around the world that we will not stand idly by when we have that kind of attack on our democratic process, that we will act, and we will act now.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott P. Brown, of New Hampshire, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to New Zealand, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Independent State of Samoa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 15 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Brown nomination?

Mr. FLAKE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 141 Ex.]

YEAS—94

| | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Baldwin | Franken | Paul |
| Barrasso | Gardner | Perdue |
| Bennet | Graham | Peters |
| Blumenthal | Grassley | Portman |
| Blunt | Hassan | Reed |
| Boozman | Hatch | Risch |
| Brown | Heinrich | Roberts |
| Burr | Heitkamp | Rounds |
| Cantwell | Heller | Rubio |
| Capito | Hirono | Sanders |
| Cardin | Hoeven | Sasse |
| Carper | Inhofe | Schumer |
| Casey | Isakson | Scott |
| Cassidy | Johnson | Shaheen |
| Cochran | Kaine | Shelby |
| Collins | Kennedy | Stabenow |
| Coons | King | Strange |
| Corker | Klobuchar | Sullivan |
| Cornyn | Lankford | Tester |
| Cortez Masto | Leahy | Thune |
| Cotton | Lee | Tillis |
| Crapo | Manchin | Toomey |
| Cruz | Markey | Udall |
| Daines | McCain | Van Hollen |
| Donnelly | McCaskill | Warner |
| Duckworth | McConnell | Warren |
| Durbin | Merkley | Whitehouse |
| Enzi | Moran | Wicker |
| Ernst | Murkowski | Wyden |
| Feinstein | Murphy | Young |
| Fischer | Murray | |
| Flake | Nelson | |

NAYS—4

Booker
Gillibrand

Harris
Schatz

NOT VOTING—2

Alexander

Menendez

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, last year the Nation was shocked by undercover videos produced by investigative journalists with the Center for Medical Progress exposing Planned Parenthood's sale of fetal body parts and the callousness with which Planned Parenthood officials described their grisly work.

As we know, as Planned Parenthood and its allies in the mainstream media hoped, outrage fades with time, and at-

tention turns—but not for long, for the abortion industry and its profiteers are never really beset by scandal. They are a scandal.

Just last month we got another reminder about the reality behind the talking points. Once again, it was the undercover journalists of the Center for Medical Progress doing the investigative journalism the mainstream media refuses to do. Once again, the video has been ignored by the pro-abortion media elite, whose principal interest is the story of the prosecution of the journalists for daring to speak this truth to their power.

The American people and their representatives in the U.S. Senate deserve to know what the new video shows. It shows the founder of Planned Parenthood's Consortium of Abortion Providers on a conference panel. She recounts a harrowing experience while performing an abortion: "An eyeball just fell down into my lap, and that is gross." Her remarks were greeted with laughter from the audience.

It shows another Planned Parenthood doctor stating: "The fetus is a tough little object, so taking it apart in the womb is very difficult."

This comment echoes a previous undercover video in which a Planned Parenthood doctor says that the bones of a 20-week old fetus were so strong that "I have to hit the gym for this."

The video shows the director of abortion services for Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast saying that she sometimes uses forceps to "pull off a leg or two" to ensure an unborn child dies before being born—in other words, to avoid the moment when our Nation's laws might protect that child.

The video shows the medical director of Planned Parenthood in Michigan talking about surprising common ground between abortion doctors and pro-life activists.

We might actually both agree that there is violence in here. Let's just give them all the violence, it's a person, it's killing. Let's just give them all that.

That is not what they say in public. It certainly isn't what they tell their patients, the women who come into their clinics—just in private, at industry conferences, between networking opportunities and drinks at the open bar. Because they know—deep down, everyone knows the Center for Medical Progress videos shock, but they do not surprise. They don't teach us anything we don't already know. All they do is remind us of an inconvenient truth that demands our attention and our action.

It is certainly stirring the pro-abortion political machine into action. As expected, the Center for Medical Progress is once again the target of criminal and civil investigations designed to intimidate further questions about the abortion industry's methods and money. But the truth is out. It is there.

As we know, threats and intimidation are tactics of guilt and desperation of the losing side in every battle