

availability of addiction treatment. I spoke with a coroner, a medical doctor, and an addiction expert on the panel as well.

These are professionals dealing with a public health crisis each and every day—not people with political agendas. They all agreed that Medicaid expansion is critical to combating addiction, improving public health, and helping individuals suffering from addiction have an opportunity to be productive citizens and have a second chance at life.

The bottom line is that this bill—this secretive, rushed bill that we will supposedly see tomorrow—will move us backward and rip healthcare away from millions of Americans. When you take health coverage away from people, people will die.

As a Member of the House, I voted for the Affordable Care Act because I knew that, at the end of the day, it would save people's lives. As elected officials and public servants, there are only a handful of votes we cast that are literally about life and death. Next week, we will see one of those votes.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to read the bill, whenever we get it, and then talk to doctors, patients, families, clinics, and hospitals in their State. I also urge my colleagues to vote no next week and to start a truly bipartisan process that keeps what works, fixes what doesn't, but, most importantly, helps all Americans afford quality healthcare in their communities.

I stand here ready and willing to be a partner in a bipartisan process and to work with my Republican colleagues to improve our healthcare system. Show us and the American people you are serious about health reform. Let's have an open and honest process and pass a bill that is genuinely in the best interest of the American people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I come weekly to the Senate whenever we are in session to give my "Time to Wake Up" speech, talking about climate change and, quite often, talking about the climate denial campaign that prevents us from taking action and, quite often, talking about the campaign finance problems in our country that make climate denial effective. Here, in Congress, it is not hard to connect the dots from campaign finance to climate denial.

The Supreme Court's Republican majority's disastrous Citizens United decision was requested by the fossil fuel industry, and the fossil fuel industry took instant advantage of it—almost

like they saw it coming. The industry and its front groups instantly used their new power conferred by Citizens United to come after politicians—Republicans in particular. Ask Bob Inglis, who backed responsible climate policies. Citizens United created new American dark-money emperors, and—no surprise—the new emperors love their new political power.

Their first payoff was that Republicans in Congress fled from any legislative action on climate change. Before Citizens United, there were multiple bipartisan climate bills. Year after year—when I was here in 2007, 2008, 2009—there were bipartisan climate bills to the left of you, bipartisan climate bills to the right of you, bipartisan climate bills cropping up all over. Today, we watch our Republican President trying to undo curbs on carbon emissions and, to the cheers of Republicans in Congress, withdrawing the United States from the historic Paris Agreement. We join Syria and Nicaragua as the only nations to reject this common cause. That, my friends, is the heavy hand of fossil fuel influence, driving us into isolation and abdication of American leadership.

Of course, right now, no Republican can safely sponsor any bill to limit carbon dioxide emissions, and so none do. Very different than before the Citizens United decision in January of 2010. That changed everything. When those five Republican justices opened up unlimited political spending to the big Republican special interests, that unlimited political spending was inevitably going to find dark-money channels. Dark-money channels hide the identity of the political donor, so that big special interests can pollute our politics with their money with seemingly clean hands.

The climate denial scheme of the fossil fuel cartel is powered politically by dark money. Whether through the lure of dark money coming in for you in a political race or the threat of dark money coming in against you in a political race, dark money powers climate denial. Well, we have just learned something new about dark money.

Chairman GRAHAM and I held hearings in our Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism to look at Russian interference in the recent 2016 election and what it portends for elections to come. Our witnesses warned us that Russia has strategically manipulated politics in Europe for decades. They started working in the former Soviet Union countries, and they expanded to where they are manipulating politics in France, Germany, Holland, England, and all over Europe. The witnesses warned us that we in America must be prepared for that. They jumped the Atlantic to manipulate the 2016 elections, and they are not going away.

One identified weakness of the United States against Russian influence was this dark money in our politics. Why is that? Well, it is obvious.

Once you allow dark money in, dark is dark. Cash from Vladimir Putin is no more traceable than cash from Charles and David Koch. One witness, a former Republican national security official, told us: "It is critical that we effectively enforce the campaign finance laws that would prevent this type of financial influence by foreign actors."

"It is critical that we effectively enforce the campaign finance laws" against foreign influence by foreign actors.

The two best studies of Russian influence in Western Europe in their elections and in their politics are "The Kremlin Playbook," by CSIS, or the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses," by the Atlantic Council. Both of them report that Russia takes advantage of nontransparency in campaign financing to build its shadowy webs of influence and control. If you leave dark-money channels lying around, it is likely that Vladimir Putin and his oligarchs will find them.

The "Trojan Horses" report warns this: "The Kremlin's blatant attempts to influence and disrupt the U.S. presidential election should serve as an inspiration for a democratic push back." That is a lower case "d" for "democratic push back," and it points to one key way we need to push back.

I will quote them again.

Electoral rules should be amended, so that publicly funded political groups, primarily political parties, should at the very least be required to report their sources of funding.

That is, end dark money.

Likewise, the "Kremlin Playbook" report warns:

Enhancing transparency and the effectiveness of the Western democratic tools, instruments, and institutions is critical to resilience against Russian influence.

Enhancing transparency means ending dark money.

Our hearing and these reports reveal another political influence tool used by the Kremlin: fake news. As we shore up our democracy to defend against Russia's fake news information warfare, we must remember this: Climate denial was the original fake news.

To give an example, here is a story that may sound familiar. An unknown hacker illegally breaks into and steals an organization's emails. The organization's emails are held until they can be released at a politically strategic moment. At the strategic moment, emails are leaked to a website with shady ties. The leaks are then amplified and spun by fake news, driven into the regular media, and have their desired political effect. Does any of that sound familiar? Of course, it is the methodology of the Russians' hack of the Democratic National Committee, right? Unknown hacker, stolen emails, strategic release, caching them until they can be used, shady website, fake news spin-up, regular media takes the bait, political damage.

If you step back and look at just the methodology, we have seen this pattern before—so-called climategate, the

fake scandal years ago cooked up by the climate denial machine. It was 2009, not 2017. The organization hacked was not the DNC but the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom. The release was timed to the U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen, not the Presidential election. The documents went to climate skeptic blogs—with, interestingly, the first upload in Russia—instead of to WikiLeaks, but the mainstream media took the bait, and the political damage was done.

At the time, the New York Times wrote:

The[se] revelations are bound to inflame the public debate as hundreds of negotiators prepare to negotiate an international climate accord at meetings in Copenhagen next month.

This climategate scheme worked so well that in November 2011, the climategate operation did it again just before the U.N. climate conference in Durban in what was dubbed climategate 2.0. Of course, the whipped-up climategate hysteria was all fake news.

As the *Guardian* wrote in February 2010:

Almost all the media and political discussion about the hacked climate emails has been based on soundbites publicised by professional [climate] sceptics and their blogs. In many cases, these have been taken out of context and twisted to mean something they were never intended to.

Eight times, everyone from the inspector general of the U.S. Department of Commerce, to the National Science Foundation, to the British Parliament found no evidence of any misconduct by the scientists, but for the climate denier groups, the truth was never the point.

This climategate stunt was the product of a fake news infrastructure built by the fossil fuel industry to attack and undermine real climate science—disinformation campaigns, false-front organizations, stables of paid-for scientists, and propaganda honed by public relations experts. This denial operation aspires to mimic and rival real science, and it is an industrial-strength adversary with big advantages. It does not need to win its disputes with real science; it just needs to create the public illusion of a real dispute. It doesn't have to waste time in peer review, and it doesn't have to be true; it just has to sound like it might be. This industrial fake news operation isn't going anywhere. It is too valuable to the big polluters.

As we prepare to face down Russia's campaign of election interference, we will have to face up to these two hard facts:

If the Kremlin wants to deploy fake news information warfare in our country, the climate denial fake news infrastructure already exists. Remember, climate denial was the original fake news.

If the Kremlin wants to deploy a surreptitious financial influence cam-

paign, the dark money infrastructure already exists. The fossil fuel industry's dark money election manipulation machinery is ready to go. Putin doesn't have to build a thing. The fossil fuel dark money and fake news infrastructure stands ready to go.

Unfortunately, we know it works because it has worked for years for the fossil fuel cartel, particularly since Citizens United allowed the fossil fuel industry to enforce silence on the Republican Party.

The dangers of fake news, dark money, climate denial, and foreign interference in our elections are all intermixed. They have brought us to the point where the President of the United States will leave the Paris Agreement, betraying the country's interests, in the service of the fossil fuel industry, the Koch brothers' climate denial operation, and Breitbart fake news.

This calls for an American response. Dark money and fake news are a sinister combination, whoever is behind them. America must address the twin threats of fake news and dark money. It is bad enough when these are the tools of the fossil fuel industry's climate denial operation, but we are on notice now. We are on notice from these reports and from multiple witnesses that the Kremlin can borrow these tools too.

I will close by asking that we clean up this mess. It may take citizen action, given the stranglehold dark money and fake news have on Congress, but this is a fight worth having. There is no good that comes out of dark money and fake news, whoever is behind them. We should rid ourselves of this sinister combination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

REMEMBERING OTTO WARMBIER

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a promising young man from Wyoming, OH—just outside of Cincinnati, my hometown—a young man whose life was drastically cut short at just 22 years of age. I rise to talk about Otto Warmbier.

Otto had all the smarts and talent you could ever ask for. He was a homecoming king and the salutatorian of the Wyoming High School class he graduated from a few years ago. He spent a summer at the London School of Economics. He was a smart kid. He won a prestigious scholarship to study at the University of Virginia. As everyone expected he would, he excelled at UVA. He got great grades. He had a thirst for learning. He loved meeting new people and hearing about their lives and their perspectives. His future was as bright as it could possibly be.

It was this smart, kindhearted young man—a college kid—who was taken prisoner by the North Korean regime for nearly 18 months. Otto's detainment and sentence were unnecessary and appalling. Neither one should have ever happened in the first place. At

some point soon after being sentenced to 15 years of hard labor, from what we know, Otto suffered a severe brain injury—from what, we don't know, and we may never know.

Whom did the North Korean Government tell about this? No one. For the next 15 months or so, they kept this a secret. They denied him access to the best medical care he deserved, and they refused repeated requests for consular access that would normally be provided to those who have been detained—requests from our government, from the Obama administration, from the Trump administration, requests from the Red Cross, requests from the Swedish Government, which provides consular service for Americans in North Korea, requests from many of us here in the Capitol.

The regime unjustly imprisoned him and then lied about his severe medical condition. By the way, they continued to tell stories that make no sense. Doctors at the University of Cincinnati—some of the best doctors in the world and just the type of medical professionals Otto should have been able to see from the start—say that North Korea's claims as to what happened simply don't stand up to the evidence.

They called him a prisoner of war, but they also violated the Geneva Convention. For North Korea to imprison Otto Warmbier with no consular access for more than a year with his medical condition and severe brain injury—it goes well beyond that. It demonstrates a complete failure to recognize fundamental human rights. Because of these actions by the North Koreans, Otto is dead. His promise has been cut short.

If there is ever any doubt about the nature of the North Korean regime—that pariah country—then Otto's case should erase all doubt. We know this regime has no regard for the rule of law or the freedoms we enjoy here, but they also have no regard for basic human rights and dignity. They have subjected hundreds of thousands of their own people to mistreatment, torture, and death for decades. They are now extending that treatment to innocent Americans. North Korea should be universally condemned for its abhorrent behavior and be held accountable for its actions.

Otto's family—God bless them—tried everything they could to bring Otto home. For 18 months—and for almost 16 months not knowing of his dire condition—they were steadfast and resilient, trying everything they could.

I was there with Fred and Cindy Warmbier when Otto finally returned from North Korea. He came home. It was incredibly emotional to watch Otto be reunited with his loving family. I believe he knew he was back home. I believe he knew he was among those who loved him.

I want to thank State Department Special Representative Joe Yun, Deputy Secretary Sullivan, and Secretary Tillerson for their work to help secure Otto's release last week and to bring him home.