

Kushner's meetings with sanctioned VEB Russian bank CEO Sergey Gorkov; Sessions' meetings with the Russian Ambassador; the Cambridge Analytica CEO's outreach to WikiLeaks to obtain Hillary Clinton's missing emails; and former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's dining with President Putin in Moscow. Those pieces of the mosaic are only the beginning. We are at a critical stage—the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end.

As a former prosecutor, I know investigations take time. The best investigations are done without deadlines. In an important case like this one, and in a complex and challenging one, we must allow all the time necessary to assemble that full mosaic and put together the pieces of this puzzle.

The Watergate scandal took 2 years to unravel, from Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's first piece in the Washington Post in June of 1972 to Nixon's resignation in August of 1974. We are less than a year into the Trump Presidency and fewer than 10 months into this investigation.

The first individuals to be indicted in the Watergate scandal were considered to be generally outside the President's inner circle. They were E. Howard Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy, and the Watergate burglars in September of 1972. No one knew—and many denied—the conspiracy that involved the President and his top lieutenants at the time of those first indictments. In these cases, too—in these first indictments and conviction—a lot more is to come.

We cannot wait until the President potentially shuts down his special counsel to come to his defense. Already, the rule of law is under threat. On Sunday—the day before the indictments were handed down—the President tweeted: “DO SOMETHING!” with regard to the Russia investigation. Although his reference was unclear exactly what he meant and whom the message was targeting, it certainly was an indication that some kind of action might be taken to thwart the investigation.

Any interference in this investigation will be a red line for me and for others in this Chamber. Let the President hear that message loud and clear. There is a red line that cannot be crossed. It is political interference or intrusion in the special counsel's investigation, and it will be met with a firestorm, I hope, on both sides of the aisle. My conversations with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle indicate they would share our outrage and outcry if there is an effort to stop and stymie this investigation or if there is any other kind of political interference in it.

Senators GRAHAM, BOOKER, WHITEHOUSE, COONS, and I have cosponsored measures that will help protect the special counsel. There are two measures now, but they are so closely similar that they should be brought together, and conversations are under-

way to do so. I expect we will have a single bill in the very near future.

We should stand with one voice against obstruction of this investigation. I ask that my colleagues go on the record now to state that they will absolutely resist and oppose any interference by the executive branch into this investigation or investigations that are underway by our congressional committees—on the House side, the Intelligence Committee and, in the Senate, the Judiciary Committee along with our Intelligence Committee. The congressional committees have separate purposes. In the Judiciary Committee, we have the unique responsibility of oversight over the Department of Justice and the FBI. We have the unique responsibility to prevent the obstruction of justice and to uncover it, as is indicated by the firing of Jim Comey. My hope is that investigation will proceed and that it will be bipartisan, so we will have hearings and subpoena witnesses with public testimony under oath and eventually some report to the American people. That is my hope, and that will be our decision here.

The decision we cannot and should not make is what the outcome will be of the special counsel investigation. We must guarantee—and we have this responsibility in the Congress—that there is adequate funding and authority for the special counsel, that there is no effort to either cut resources or limit the purview of the special counsel or place constraints on the time it may take for this probe to conclude. There should be no firing and no pardons, and we should speak out and stand up to assure that message reaches the White House loud and clear.

This moment is one of historic magnitude. I cannot emphasize how strongly I feel but also how deeply my colleagues have expressed to me their own feelings about our responsibility in this moment.

The grand jury that is bringing these indictments is an arm of the courts, which should be independent of both the executive and legislative branches. That independence gives the special counsel some new measure of permanence and protection, but the President can still try to fire the special counsel. He cannot fire the grand jury or the U.S. District Court judge who impaneled the grand jury. Judicial review of any firing of the special counsel, which is the core principle of our measure—the Special Counsel Independence Protection Act—would add a highly significant protection to not just deter misguided and deeply mistaken actions, throwing our Nation into turmoil, but also assuring that confidence and trust remains with the special counsel, and he can follow facts and the law with the full support of the American people. The American people can put their trust and faith in him and in our courts. We should assure that we uphold that faith and trust.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, since day one, the President of the United States has made it clear that his top priority, when it comes to healthcare in our country, is to score political points by attacking ObamaCare. He has even said repeatedly that healthcare in our country will “implode,” but this was not just a prediction that President Trump made, it was his goal, and he has tried virtually everything he can do to make that implosion a reality.

In January, he abruptly pulled funding for outreach days before the end of the 2017 open enrollment period without any analysis of how that might affect patients and families, and he signed executive orders specifically designed to inject uncertainty and increased costs into the healthcare system.

President Trump then dedicated the spring and summer to attempting to jam partisan, extraordinarily destructive legislation through the House and Senate to repeal the Affordable Care Act, despite one independent analysis after another showing that each version of TrumpCare would cause premiums to spike, take coverage away from millions of people, rip protections away from patients with preexisting conditions, and gut Medicaid.

This fall—after TrumpCare failed another time in the Senate—he slashed by 90 percent the investments that help inform families about their coverage options and followed through on his year-long threat to discontinue payments designed to lower out-of-pocket costs for low-income enrollees.

This is a scenario that healthcare experts said would cause mass consumer confusion and anxiety, one that insurance companies planned for by shifting that burden of uncertainty to patients and taxpayers in the form of higher premiums and fewer options in State marketplaces.

Now, this is by no means the full list of ways President Trump has attempted his healthcare sabotage, but it does explain why we are here now. Today is the first day of the open enrollment period for 2018, and as a direct result of this President's actions, families are going to see higher premiums, more out-of-pocket costs, and fewer coverage options. Many families will have to change their coverage if they want to avoid paying hundreds of dollars more in premiums.

At a time when we need to continue to do more to bend the healthcare cost curve in the right direction, taxpayers are being burdened with higher

healthcare costs to the Federal Government—not because of any improvement in quality or comprehensiveness, just because of the chaos this administration has caused.

In fact, just last week, the Trump administration proposed a rule to double down on the sabotage in 2019 that would let insurers cover fewer services in addition to raising costs. I have to say, I just truly never imagined that a President of the United States would so openly and uncaringly root for the people of this country to be worse off. But that is exactly what President Trump is doing. It needs to be said, and it needs to be stopped.

What makes this even more frustrating is that a lot of it could have been stopped months ago if Republican leaders hadn't insisted on trying to help this administration carry out its partisan, wrecking-ball healthcare strategy.

Back in September, Chairman ALEXANDER and I were very near agreement on a bipartisan bill to stabilize healthcare markets and protect families from higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs through regular order, through a process that actually engaged over half the Senate. We were on the verge of reaching an agreement when Republican leaders froze our negotiations. Why? In order to jam TrumpCare through the Senate one more time.

Let me repeat that. Republican leaders hit the pause button on a bipartisan process that could have lowered premiums and stabilized markets, exposing our patients and families to the full impact of President Trump's sabotage.

That is the bad news, but the good news is that the legislation Chairman ALEXANDER and I ultimately agreed on can and will still have an impact—not just a few years from now but in 2018—if Republican leaders don't stand in the way again. Our bill would, among other priorities, continue out-of-pocket cost reduction payments and make sure that patients and families, not insurance companies, see the benefit of that certainty in the form of rebates next year. The legislation Chairman ALEXANDER and I have proposed, with 12 Democratic and 12 Republican cosponsors, would do a lot to help us get things back on track. It would tie President Trump's hands on sabotage, and it would send a very powerful message that elected officials in Congress can work together to get things done when we focus on common ground rather than scoring political points.

I would once again urge the majority leader to allow our legislation to get a vote. It has the support of 60-plus Senators, and it is growing. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has said that it provides billions in savings and would stabilize the markets this year and lower premiums in 2019. And the President told Chairman ALEXANDER that he supports this process moving forward.

There is no reason to wait. There is absolutely no excuse for inaction, and I

am going to continue doing everything I can to make that clear until Republican leaders finally listen to the patients and families they serve.

Mr. President, while I am here today, I also want to take a few minutes to speak on another way that I believe President Trump and Republicans are taking our country in a direction that is deeply harmful; that is, by stacking our courts with extreme conservative judges.

The Senate this week is going to vote on four judicial nominees who each have the far-rightwing seal of approval. Two are on President Trump's short list for Supreme Court Justices, meaning they would automatically vote to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Unfortunately, their views on many things—LGBTQ rights, sexual assault, criminal justice, and corporate interests—are just as deeply troubling. One of the nominees we are considering this week advocated for using electric shocks for criminal punishment, and two—Amy Barrett and Stephanos Bibas—were nominated only after Republicans blocked the nominations of Myra Selby and Rebecca Haywood—both who happen to be African-American women—to the respective benches.

It is clear that as Republican leaders' list of legislative failures grows longer, their effort to enact their agenda by administrative action and by stacking the courts is only going to accelerate. That might appeal to extreme conservatives—in fact, I am pretty sure it does—but the truth is that whether it is healthcare or infrastructure or taxes, most people across the country really want to see Congress working together.

I am going to continue doing everything I can to speak out and fight back against extreme, harmful steps that are being taken by this administration and allowed by Republican leaders here in Congress and also to show there is a better way to get things done—by working under regular order, across the aisle, and putting people, not politics, first. That is what families rightfully expect, and that is what we all should be focused on.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

NEW YORK CITY TERROR ATTACK

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I would like to start my remarks this morning by offering my thoughts to the victims of yesterday's horrendous act of terror in New York City, my thanks to the first responders, and I would note the resiliency of the people of New York. Once again, they are going forward with their lives today, showing the world and anyone who would do us harm that Americans stand together and that we move forward regardless of what our foes may try to do.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, I also rise today to encourage Granite Staters—as my colleague from Washington did—and people across the country to take advan-

tage of the health insurance open enrollment period, which begins today and runs through December 15.

Every citizen deserves quality, affordable health insurance coverage to help them live healthy and productive lives. Access to healthcare is critical to the freedom, dignity, and well-being of our citizens, and it also contributes to a productive workforce and a thriving economy.

I still remember meeting with a constituent named Jo, about a year or two ago, who has a chronic health condition. When she lost her job in 2009 and lost her health insurance with it, her condition deteriorated to the point where she couldn't work, and a downward spiral ensued. She lost her home. She couldn't get healthcare because she had no resources. Because of the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion, she was eventually able to get healthcare, to get the surgery and therapy she needed, and now she is working again. So healthcare is not only for the benefit of the individual who receives it; it helps that individual become a productive member of our workforce.

Affordable, quality care is also critically important to those who are working but may not otherwise be able to afford health insurance even if employed. It is something I have heard often this year from citizens of my State, as my Republican colleagues attempted to pass TrumpCare legislation that would have led to higher healthcare costs for less care.

At an emergency field hearing in June that I held with Senator SHAHEEN, we heard from a woman named Enna from Exeter, NH. Enna, who is self-employed, said that prior to the Affordable Care Act, her family was unable to maintain insurance consistently. Even when she did have it, her previous policy didn't cover critical preventive care that she needed. As a result of the ACA, Enna has been able to purchase affordable health insurance through the marketplace in New Hampshire for herself and her family of four, giving them the peace of mind that comes with having health insurance, while continuing to grow her own business.

Enna's story is the story of so many people in New Hampshire, and it represents why it is essential for people across the country to take advantage of this open enrollment period.

From today through December 15, Granite Staters and all Americans have an opportunity to sign up for a healthcare plan at www.coveringnewhampshire.org or www.healthcare.gov. It is also important for people to take this opportunity to see what other plans are available, to shop around and see whether other plans offer more savings than their current one does, and it is critical to educate our friends and neighbors about these options, given the Trump administration's attempts to sabotage our Nation's healthcare