

been spreading on social media. I have bipartisan legislation that would address an aspect of this. This legislation is cosponsored by Senator TODD YOUNG, and it is legislation that would give law enforcement the tools they need to create greater transparency about foreign individuals and entities that are operating in the United States in the interest of other governments. It would make it easier for the public to better track information they are receiving, particularly from governments that are hostile to the United States.

This bill would give the Department of Justice necessary authority to investigate potential violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which is also known as FARA. We have heard a lot about that. This was legislation that was passed during the thirties, as there was fear about the rise of Nazism and Hitler in Germany and the effort to spread propaganda in the United States.

This would allow the American public to clearly trace where information is coming from and who is paying for it. I think, in this age of misinformation, that is especially important to the public.

At a time when our law enforcement officials, foreign policy experts, and leaders continue to grapple with the extent of Russia's intrusion into our democratic elections, this legislation is more urgent than ever. The need for this legislation is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the case of Russian propaganda networks like RT America and Sputnik International. Both networks continually propagate and share content and programming that are designed to very subtly confuse and influence audiences worldwide. If you have ever listened to either of those channels, you will know there is just this subtle difference in how they present information.

In the United States, RT America is available on cable TVs across the country. It is considered to be one of the most high-profile assets in Vladimir Putin's vast \$1.4 billion propaganda machine.

According to an assessment made public by the U.S. intelligence community in January, RT is the Kremlin's "principal international outlet," and it is integral to Russia's information warfare operations across the globe. The Kremlin selects the staff for RT and closely supervises RT's coverage, including disinformation and false news stories designed to undermine our democracy. If you have any question about that, watch RT here. It is on the cable network here in the DC area.

RT News has publicly boasted that it can dodge our laws by claiming to be financed by a nonprofit organization and not by the Russian Government. Recently, the Department of Justice asked RT America to, in fact, register as a foreign agent. RT rejected an entirely reasonable request from the Justice Department to respect our laws. They refused to register.

How did we respond? Well, we continued to allow RT America to spread its disinformation and false narratives. This is unacceptable. We responded that way because we don't have the teeth we need in the law to be able to enforce it. That is what my legislation with Senator YOUNG will do. That is why it is so important. It would strengthen FARA by giving the Department of Justice authority to compel foreign organizations to produce documentation to confirm funding sources and foreign connections. This new investigative authority was requested by the Department of Justice, and it is supported by the Government Accountability Office, the Sunlight Foundation, and the Project on Government Oversight. This is a good government piece of legislation.

In fact, if this authority that we have in our legislation were in place today, the Justice Department could immediately investigate RT America and publicly expose its ties to the Kremlin. In the absence of such authority, all the Justice Department can do is ask RT to voluntarily adhere to FARA regulations and hope the propaganda outlet complies. What are the odds of that? Pretty slim. Clearly, based on RT's refusal to comply with FARA, the Kremlin is well aware of the limitations that are inherent in our law.

As we wait for this commonsense legislation to move forward, the Kremlin, RT America, and Sputnik continue to wield their harmful propaganda and attempt to influence the American public.

Since the publication of the intelligence community's January report on Russia's interference in our 2016 Presidential election, we have learned that Moscow spent millions of dollars buying ads on social media sites and search engines, often using the very clips that had been aired by RT on its YouTube channel.

Last week, representatives of American social media companies testified before Congress and illustrated the lengths the Kremlin went in order to deceptively spread divisive propaganda, all seemingly without a trace or any clear indication about the origins of these ads and RT's news blasts.

The misinformation included numerous reports run by RT News on supposed U.S. election fraud and voting. So they spread, and they clearly intended to spread confusion about our elections in 2016 to try and encourage people to believe our elections don't work, to undermine our election process. They talked about machine vulnerabilities. They claimed the results of U.S. elections could not be trusted and did not reflect the people's will. Sadly, too many people saw those stories and believed they were real.

These are not just random examples of fake news. These stories are part and parcel of a broader influence campaign designed and directed by the Kremlin's leadership and pedaled by government-funded trolls in St. Petersburg and

other front organizations. So in the same way that Russia is building up its military force, its navy, its ability to operate in space, and its missile program, it has also built up its propaganda campaign in ways that are designed to undermine Western democracies. If we don't pay attention to this, then shame on us.

We are, of course, a resilient democracy. We are confident that our values and institutions will prevail in the free marketplace of ideas. Our Constitution, unlike Russia's, protects the right of individuals and organizations to spread Russian viewpoints, disinformation, and, even, outright lies. But no organization, including RT America or any other front outlet for a country that is hostile to the United States, has the right to conceal a foreign funding source and thumb its nose at requests from our Department of Justice.

The American people have a right to know if RT America is a Russian propaganda organization that takes its direction from the Kremlin. They have a right to know who is funding those programs and what kind of misinformation they are spreading.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to put an end to the Kremlin's charade by supporting the Foreign Agents Registration Modernization and Enforcement Act. Let's give the Department of Justice the tools it needs to investigate and expose RT America and to fight back against the Kremlin's interference in our democracy.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUL-LIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

HONORING OUR VETERANS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate the courageous service and selfless sacrifice of our Nation's veterans.

Honoring our veterans is one of the greatest privileges I have as a Senator, which is why I often attend celebrations in Arkansas to acknowledge and salute some of the brave men and women who have served our Nation in uniform.

I recently had the pleasure to recognize the service and valor of 15 Arkansas veterans during the Arkansas Military Veterans' Hall of Fame induction ceremony. The class of 2017 inductees comes from all across Arkansas. These veterans served in conflicts ranging from World War II through the War on

Terror. Together, they have earned some of our Nation's most prestigious honors and commendations, including the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, and the Silver Star Medal for gallantry.

I also had the opportunity to present three Arkansas veterans with the medals and commendations they had earned when I attended the Veterans Day celebration in Fort Smith, AR. I am proud of the work that we do to obtain the service medals and recognition that these heroes have earned.

We have also worked hard to honor the efforts of Mr. Errol Severe, of Eureka Springs, AR, as he strives to preserve and promote the role of joint service aviation cadets in the 20th century. Mr. Severe, an Air Force veteran, operates the Aviation Cadet Museum, which is the only museum in the United States that exists exclusively to celebrate the teamwork, collaboration, patriotism, and courage of the individuals who trained for and fought in the national aviation effort from 1917 to 1965.

As we recognize our veterans and honor the sacrifice and heroism of those who have been called to serve our Nation in uniform, we must recommit ourselves to fighting on their behalf. As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am committed to honoring the promise made to our veterans.

We have made tremendous progress during this Congress. In June, President Trump signed the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. This strengthens accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs by allowing the VA to dismiss bad employees while protecting those who expose wrongdoing.

We are also continuing to improve the Choice Act. Earlier this year, we hosted listening sessions with Arkansas veterans to obtain their input on the strengths and the weaknesses of the program, as Congress continues to expand access to adequate healthcare options for veterans.

In addition, we enhanced the post-9/11 GI bill benefits to increase educational opportunities. I am proud to have played a role in crafting this law, along with my colleague from Oregon, Senator WYDEN. I am pleased that he can join me on the floor to recognize the importance of the provision we have championed for several years to fix an oversight that prevented combat-injured members of the National Guard and Reserve from receiving the same GI bill benefits as Active-Duty military members. This is a great example of Senators on both sides of the aisle working together to get things done.

Fixing this clear oversight in the law that unfairly penalized wounded and injured servicemembers and kept them from accruing educational benefits they rightly earned while in recovery was a priority for both of us because

these men and women deserved better. To correct this injustice, we introduced legislation earlier this year, as well as in the last Congress, and I am pleased that it was included in the comprehensive GI reform bill that was signed into law this summer.

While we have made improvements, there is still more that needs to be done, including the expansion of VA services for female veterans. I encourage my colleagues to support the Deborah Sampson Act to address these concerns, and I urge VA Secretary Shulkin to implement reforms written in the bill that don't require congressional action. Our work must continue.

Today, my colleague from Indiana, Senator DONNELLY, and I will introduce legislation to allow veterans who served in Thailand during the Vietnam war era the opportunity to prove toxic exposure in order to qualify for VA benefits.

Let me take one more opportunity to thank our veterans and their families. This country made a promise to our veterans that we must live up to, and I am proud to be able to work for them to ensure that we follow through with our commitment.

The men and women who put their lives on the line in defense of our country deserve our undying gratitude. They also deserve our support when they transition back into civilian life, which is why we must support efforts to improve their health, their ability to further their education needs, and to pursue their dreams, just as they fought to make that possible for their fellow Americans. That sentiment is shared throughout this Chamber. For all of our disagreements in Washington, we truly do come together in support of our veterans. That is one area of agreement.

I thank Senator WYDEN for his leadership to ensure equal treatment of education benefits for wounded guardsmen and reservists. I was very proud to work with him in support of this effort, and I look forward to working with him in the future.

Our guardsmen and reservists are called to defend and protect our Nation, exactly like Active-Duty members. So it is only right that they receive the same GI bill benefits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

RECOGNIZING THE NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard. For more than 150 years, the Nebraska National Guard has been protecting our State and keeping our Nation safe.

Established in 1854, the Guard predates the founding of the State of Nebraska by 12 years, and those who serve in its ranks today carry on a proud tradition. Whenever the Nation calls, Nebraska Guard men and women have been at the leading edge, responding in times of military need and national crisis.

When the shadow of fascism spread across Europe in World War II, Nebraska's 134th Infantry Regiment was there to bring the light of democracy back to the continent, liberating the French city of Saint-Lo from Nazi occupation.

When terrorists struck on September 11, the Nebraska National Guard was there to answer the call. In the time since, over 10,000 Nebraska Guard soldiers and airmen have deployed to fight the War on Terror and serve in defense of our Nation. This means that in the last 16 years, there have been only 3 days when every Nebraska soldier and airman was at home with their loved ones. Saying no is not part of the culture of the Nebraska National Guard. When the Nation calls, there is no hesitation. They go where the mission requires them to go.

At this very moment, we can find Nebraska soldiers and airmen deployed all across the globe, protecting our great Nation. Whether it is the dozens of National Guard men and women who are currently conducting detainee operations at Guantanamo Bay or those preparing to deploy next year to key positions in the Pacific and the Middle East, our Guard stands ready to answer the call.

The Guard is also playing an important role in working with our allies abroad. Since 1993, the Nebraska National Guard has been linked with the Czech Republic through the State Partnership Program. As Eastern Europe emerged from the heavy hand of communism, the Nebraska National Guard was there working side by side with their military to collaborate, share, and assist, forging a lasting bond that remains strong to this day. This year marks the 25th anniversary of that partnership, and we are all extremely proud of the work our Guard is doing to help bring our democracies together.

That spirit of service extends to their operations here in the homeland as well. When hurricanes so tragically struck our neighbors in Texas, Florida, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, the Nebraska Guard was there to help. The numbers speak for themselves. In Texas, they rescued 461 people and delivered 142,000 pounds of cargo, 6,000 pounds of bottled water, and 1,000 pounds of medical supplies. During Hurricane Irma, 102 members participated in an aviation task force for support operations. Right now, 58 soldiers and airmen are providing assistance to the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

The scope of their response to these disasters is a testament to their dedication and showcases the flexibility of the Guard's mission. Whether it is responding to domestic emergencies, overseas combat, or reconstruction missions, these men and women are there to respond with speed, efficiency, and strength.

One of the most impressive things about the Nebraska National Guard is that these are regular, everyday citizens who decided to answer the call to serve. They are our neighbors, our