

prosecute his enemies. But in the long history of our grand, wonderful country—God's noble experiment, as the Founding Fathers called it, and it still is today—that has never been what the Justice Department has stood for. It is an independent Federal agency tasked with following the law wherever it leads, free of considerations of politics or power. Mr. Rosenstein is acting in line with that long and great tradition, and it is no reason—none at all—for the President to fire him.

My friends on the other side of the aisle know, just as well as we do, that firing Mr. Rosenstein or Mr. Mueller would precipitate a constitutional crisis. Our constitutional order is built upon a bedrock faith in the rule of law, of equality under the law. No person—not even the President—can subvert that principle for his or her political interests or needs.

Let me remind everyone that the investigation is not a witch hunt, as the President keeps tweeting it is. It has resulted in multiple indictments and guilty pleas. By definition, that is not a witch hunt. The Trump administration itself leveled sanctions against Russians based on information obtained as a result of the Russia probe. So if the President's own administration, separate from Mueller, leveled sanctions against the Russians using information that Mueller has gotten, how can he then proceed to call it a witch hunt? It just doesn't add up.

The investigation concerns the national security of the United States. If the President were to try to shut it down for personal, political reasons, there is no doubt we would face a constitutional crisis.

So let's make this simple. The consequences of firing Mr. Rosenstein, Mr. Mueller, or issuing pardons would be dire for our democracy. We have clear evidence from the President himself that each of those things is a possibility. President Trump basically mused about it on national television.

Every Democrat and every Republican, regardless of politics, party, or ideology, should stand up and say that what the President is considering is not only wrong but a real threat to the constitutional order of this government. Once they admit that, what rational person would not want to take steps to prevent a constitutional crisis from happening now, before the President acts precipitously and against the whole meaning of our democracy? We, in Congress, have the power to prevent that constitutional crisis and to do it right away. We have the power to protect the special counsel's investigation. Only the Deputy Attorney General can fire the special counsel and only for cause.

A bipartisan group of Senators, including Senators GRAHAM and TILLIS on the Republican side and BOOKER and COONS on the Democratic side, have come up with legislation that would allow the special counsel to appeal a firing to a panel of independent judges

under an expedited procedure to determine if Mr. Mueller were fired for cause. If he weren't fired for cause, the special counsel would be reinstituted immediately. That makes eminent sense. The bipartisan legislation would simply provide a legal avenue to reinforce existing procedures and assure that the grand tradition of rule of law is maintained.

Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member FEINSTEIN have agreed to hold a hearing and mark up this legislation. I applaud them both for it and urge the members of the Judiciary Committee to approve this legislation without watering it down or weakening it with amendments. We should pass it out of committee. Leader MCCONNELL should bring it to the floor of the Senate quickly, where I believe it would pass with a very large majority, and we should pressure our colleagues in the House to do the same. It is my view that if the bill came to the floor and passed the Senate by a significant majority, the House would follow because the pressure would be enormous.

The rule of law, quite simply, should not be a partisan issue. It must not be a partisan issue. We cannot ever let it become a partisan issue. The last time it was at risk under President Nixon's administration, Republicans stepped up to the plate, and they went down in history as very admirable. I hope they will do it again. The Congress should speak loudly and soon by passing this legislation in both Chambers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask to continue my remarks for a few minutes on another subject.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I apologize to my colleague from Delaware.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mr. President, on a second issue, on the issue of taxes, since the beginning of the tax debate, Republicans have insisted their bill is about cutting taxes for working Americans. This is despite the fact that the bill would direct 83 percent of the benefits to the top 1 percent of Americans. Despite the fact that they made corporate tax cuts permanent but let individual tax cuts expire, Republicans said that middle-class workers were the focus. Democrats warned that if you give big corporations, powerful corporations, and the wealthiest of Americans the overwhelming lion's share of the tax cuts, the corporations would do what they have always done when they have higher profits—distribute it amongst themselves. Unfortunately, we said it at the time, and I wish we were wrong, but our warnings proved prescient.

Almost every day, we hear a new story about a corporation using the savings from the Republican tax bill to purchase its own stock. That is called a stock buyback. What does it do? It

boosts the corporation's stock price to provide a reward for the wealthy CEOs and top executives who have the shares and shareholders, the vast majority of whom are wealthy Americans and a third of whom are not even Americans. They get the breaks.

A stock buyback is designed to feather the nest and increase the power and support among shareholders of the CEO. When you buy back stock, you use that money—instead of investing it in workers, instead of investing it in a new plant, instead of investing it in training—to decrease the number of shares, which raises the value of the other shares. So who benefits? The shareholders. Who are the shareholders? They are the CEOs and major officers of the corporations, so they are not doing this without self-interest.

As I said, 80 percent of the stocks in America are owned by the top 10 percent of the wealthy. It is not very good.

Let me give you an example. These are the kinds of things that are happening daily. Devon Energy announced a billion-dollar stock buyback in March, and 2 days ago they said that they are laying off 9 percent of their workers “to streamline operations and boost the shale oil producer's sagging returns and stock price.” They are not atypical.

According to JUST Capital, 60 percent of the money in the Republican tax break went to shareholders, who tend to be the wealthiest, and only 6 percent went to workers. So much for all the talk that when we gave the corporations all this money, the workers would gain most of the benefits. It has not happened.

Stock buybacks are a big reason why workers no longer see the benefits of record corporate profits. Why? Because instead of investing in corporate profits and things that benefit the long-term health of the economy and workers—higher wages, new equipment, research, development, and new hires—corporations spend the money on buybacks.

In fact, stock buybacks were illegal because they so feathered the nest of the very few, that when corporate CEOs and their board did it, they were not objective observers because they would make so much money from them. So stock buybacks were illegal until 1982, which is about the same time wages stopped increasing with corporate profits.

Senator BALDWIN has led the charge in our caucus to go back to the days before 1982. So when corporations had a lot of profits, whether through earnings, revenues, or tax breaks, they couldn't use these stock buybacks, and almost certainly a larger percentage of money would go to the workers and the middle class.

The theory behind the Republican tax bill was to allow corporations and the richest Americans to keep more of their already very great wealth, and maybe the benefits will trickle down to

everybody else. As we are already seeing, the idea was folly. The middle class will pay the price.

Because of the enormous cost of the Republican tax bill—\$1.9 trillion, according to the most recent CBO projection—the number keeps going up. All of our deficit hawks on the other side of the aisle somehow forgot about that when it came to giving breaks to the wealthiest Americans and big corporations. The deficit and debt will grow over the next several years, and many Republicans are already talking about targeting Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare for cuts to make up the difference. On top of the tax bill that mostly goes to the folks who need it the least, the Republican tax bill has become an excuse for Republicans to come after Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

It was a huge mistake and could have been crafted a whole lot better had our Republican colleagues decided to work with us Democrats.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, we are here today primarily to discuss the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to serve as Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Before I turn to Andrew Wheeler, I want to spend a few minutes talking about our current EPA Administrator.

Recent reports of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's ethical shortcomings and lavish spending on the American taxpayers' dime are breathtaking, but they should come as no surprise. Just over a year ago, I stood at the very same spot where I stand today to discuss Mr. Pruitt's nomination. Last February, I said that never before had I been forced to consider a candidate to lead the EPA who had been so focused throughout his career on crippling the very Agency he sought to lead or so hostile to the basic protections that keep Americans and our environment safe.

At the same time, I warned our colleagues that based on his record as attorney general of Oklahoma, Scott Pruitt had an unacceptably casual approach to meeting obligations as a public servant. Unfortunately, with respect to too many of my colleagues, that warning fell on deaf ears.

In the 15 months since he was confirmed—narrowly confirmed—Mr. Pruitt has proven to be an even worse leader than I imagined on a policy front but also with regard to one ethical failing after another, as well as his disregard for the American taxpayers.

The Presiding Officer and I have spent large portions of our lives serving our country in uniform—he as a marine, me as a naval flight officer. I was a midshipman for 4 years before being commissioned, served 5 years in the war in Southeast Asia, and 18 years at the end of the Cold War as a P-3 aircraft mission commander.

From the age of 11, I was trained to be a leader. My guess is, my colleague

was also. I was a Boy Scout, Civil Air Patrol cadet, naval ROTC midshipman, served 5 years on Active Duty, and another 18 years as a Reserve flight officer. If I don't know something about leadership, it is my fault. I have had great mentors, great role models. I was trained as a leader since the age of 11.

I want to mention this about leadership. Leaders are humble, not haughty. Leaders are servants. Our job is to serve, not be served. We lead by example. Leaders stay out of step when everybody else is marching to the wrong tune. Leaders put the best team around them that they can find. When the team does well, the leader gives credit to the team. If the team falls short, the leader takes the blame.

Leaders are aspirational. They appeal to our better instincts. They are purveyors of hope. Leaders build bridges, not walls. Leaders focus on doing what is right—not what is easy or what is expedient but what is right. Leaders treat other people the way they want to be treated. They actually embody the Golden Rule.

Leaders focus on excellence in everything they do. If it isn't perfect, they say: Let's make it better. Let's work with other people to make it better. When leaders know they are right, are convinced they are right, and other people realize they are right, leaders don't give up.

I knew 13 or 14 months ago what kind of steward Scott Pruitt would be with respect to protecting our air, our water, our public health. I had no idea—no idea—what kind of leader he would prove to be with respect to ethical behavior or misbehavior. What a shame. What a shame.

Over the last 2 weeks, we have been barely able to go a day without learning new and increasingly troubling information about the Administrator's failures to conduct himself in a way a public servant, working on behalf of the American people, should behave.

His poor financial judgment and serious ethical lapses make it clear that he is unfit for office. Setting aside his lack of stewardship on environmental issues, he should have never been confirmed in the first place.

Administrator Pruitt's conduct is emblematic of an extraordinarily and ethically tone-deaf administration. There are some good people in this administration, a number of them. Our Presiding Officer knows them, and I know them. Unfortunately, one of them is not running the Environmental Protection Agency, where lavish trips, extravagant office furniture, and personal favors are the norm, not the exception.

President Trump said he was going to drain the swamp. Scott Pruitt is the definition of what I recently heard one person call a swamp creature, with his close ties to polluters, misuse of taxpayer money, and corrupt dealings.

Should the Senate confirm Andrew Wheeler, we will be setting him on a course to address not just these recent

allegations but these occurrences, these terrible examples.

As of today, Administrator Pruitt faces growing bipartisan calls for his firing or resignation amid nearly 25 ethics and improper expenditure allegations—25—and growing.

This is 2 weeks of turmoil. This chart is the cliff notes version. There is more. It is not anything to be proud of. It is a lot to be ashamed of—excessive raises for political appointees who came with him from Oklahoma and unprecedented security requirements are just a few of his growing collection of scandals that have made headlines almost every day in recent weeks.

Since his confirmation, Administrator Pruitt has developed a taste for the finer things in life, particularly when the American taxpayer is picking up the tab. Mr. Pruitt has been broadly criticized for his lavish spending of taxpayer dollars on various flights in his first year as EPA Administrator, including international trips, first-class flights, weekend trips home to Oklahoma, and chartered military jets.

Mr. Pruitt somehow managed to spend over \$1,600 on a flight from Washington, DC, to New York City last year. It takes real effort to find a seat that expensive. My offer to Mr. Pruitt still stands; that the Administrator join me on Amtrak and save a ton of money.

Administrator Pruitt took a \$40,000 trip to Morocco in December 2017 to promote liquefied natural gas—an issue that is not within his Agency's jurisdiction. On his way to Morocco, Administrator Pruitt missed two flights while staying in Paris for 2 days. Reports also indicate that Administrator Pruitt spent \$120,000 on a trip to Italy last June, including \$30,000 in security-related expenses, \$53,000 in travel vouchers, and a \$36,000 chartered flight from Cincinnati to New York City to catch his international flight. A \$36,000 chartered flight from Cincinnati to New York City—really?

Mr. Pruitt has spent more than \$105,000 in first-class flights during his first year alone in office. When confronted with the exorbitant pricetag on his first-class travel, the Agency said Mr. Pruitt's first-class travel was necessary—listen to this—because of the high number of security threats he had received. If that were truthful, we should all be concerned. There are a lot of reasons to believe it is not truthful.

He apparently did not consider a first-class upgrade to be vital to his safety while flying on his own dime, since Administrator Pruitt flew coach on personal trips back home to Oklahoma.

Administrator Pruitt is also facing scrutiny for assembling a team of 20 security agents deployed in 19 vehicles—20 security agents deployed in 19 vehicles—who provided an unprecedented 24/7 level of protection. Administrator Pruitt's unprecedented domestic and international travel has led to rapidly escalating costs, with his around-the-clock security detail racking up so

much overtime—get this—that many hit their annual salary caps of \$160,000.

CNN has reported that the demands of providing the Administrator with the 24/7 security coverage he desired meant taking some investigators from their field work.

The New York Times reported that Administrator Pruitt asked his security team to use his vehicle's emergency lights and sirens to speed through traffic en route to a French restaurant right here in Washington, DC, to celebrate the President's withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement. And when the security agent advised Mr. Pruitt that sirens were only to be used in an emergency, the agent was reassigned less than 2 weeks later.

The Washington Post reported that Administrator Pruitt also sought a \$100,000-a-month private jet membership, a bulletproof SUV with run-flat tires, and \$70,000 for office furniture, including a bulletproof desk.

I am not sure where Administrator Pruitt thinks he works, but his security detail has cost the American taxpayers nearly \$3 million during his tenure—\$3 million—roughly three times that of his predecessor Gina McCarthy.

Related to Administrator Pruitt's apparent privacy concerns, he felt the need for taxpayers to pay for him to install a private, soundproof, \$43,000 phone booth in his office at EPA headquarters. He added \$6,000 biometric locks to the booth, paid \$3,000 to have his office swept for bugs, and described his soundproof booth as a sensitive compartmented information facility. No other EPA Administrator in history felt the need for such a booth. I am not aware of any Cabinet Secretary who has felt that kind of need.

Earlier this week, Administrator Pruitt removed a career staffer who approved an internal report that undermined Mr. Pruitt's claims that he needed to fly first class, a 24/7 security detail, a bulletproof desk, and other unprecedented security protections. The career staffer who questioned those expenditures, who approved the internal report discussing them, was removed.

Reports have also surfaced that Administrator Pruitt bypassed the White House to hire ex-lobbyists and sidestep President Trump's promise to drain the swamp and require appointees to sign an ethics pledge. Utilizing an obscure provision in the Safe Drinking Water Act intended to let the Agency quickly hire senior management and scientific personnel, Mr. Pruitt instead used his authority to skirt the ethics pledge and increase the number of ex-lobbyists who could work on issues of importance to their previous clients with impunity.

It goes on. Mr. Pruitt used this same authority to again bypass the White House and grant significant raises to favored staff.

After the White House refused to boost the pay of those favored staff, Administrator Pruitt reappointed both

staffers under the Safe Drinking Water Act authority, allowing him to set salary levels himself. A 30-year-old senior counsel who worked for Pruitt in Oklahoma was given a raise of approximately \$56,000 a year—\$56,000 a year. That raise is just \$1,000 short of the annual median household income for our country. Mr. Pruitt's 26-year-old director of scheduling of events got a pay bump too—almost \$30,000.

On his interview with FOX News last week, Mr. Pruitt denied knowledge of the raises, but recently reported emails among EPA staff indicated that Mr. Pruitt was aware and personally involved with at least one of those raises.

Perhaps the most troubling among the litany of questionable financial expenditures and ethical lapses Mr. Pruitt has exhibited during his time as Administrator are recent reports that say he demoted, reassigned, or pushed out staff who tried to curtail his spending or question his ethical misbehavior.

The New York Times reported 2 weeks ago that at least five officials—both career EPA employees and one political appointee, four of them high-ranking—were reassigned, demoted, or pushed out after they raised concerns about Mr. Pruitt's excessive spending and mismanagement.

Just yesterday we learned that Mr. Pruitt wanted to revamp EPA memorabilia to, of all things, more prominently highlight himself. That is not what leadership or public service are supposed to be.

The list goes on. Almost every day a new scandal emerges, and Mr. Pruitt's alleged actions and ethical shortcomings surpass what many of us thought even possible. Yet he continues to serve the American people as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Unfortunately, this outcome was predictable. I hope to go to a baseball game in Delaware tonight, the home opener for the Wilmington Blue Rocks, the Kansas City Royals' farm club. Some of the pitchers are going to throw a pitch tonight, and the pitch will be well telegraphed. That means the hitters can sort of guess what is coming their way.

Well, this outcome was predictable. This pitch was well telegraphed. When the Senate confirms a candidate who has focused throughout his career on crippling the very Agency he seeks to lead, we should not expect a different result. Expecting anything more from Mr. Pruitt would be foolish. He spent 6 years as Attorney General of Oklahoma attacking the very Agency that he now leads—suing the very Agency he now leads.

The only question is when President Trump or Members of this body will finally hold Scott Pruitt accountable for the damage he has done to the Agency and the environment he has promised and pledged and sworn to protect.

We should know whether Andrew Wheeler is up to the task of helping to right this badly damaged EPA ship, to

restore confidence, and to get it headed back on the right course.

So, once again, I will warn my colleagues that Scott Pruitt's behavior should give us pause before we consider another nomination.

Some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle may suggest that I am grandstanding or that this is some effort to score political points. Let me just say that this is serious stuff. This is serious stuff not just to Democrats, not just to Republicans or Independents, not just to the people in government, but to the people who pay for that government—the taxpayers of this country.

Today we are considering the nominee to serve as the Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Andrew Wheeler. The Deputy Administrator is second in command at the Agency. The role of Deputy Administrator is to assist the Administrator—in this case, Scott Pruitt—in overseeing the day-to-day operations that help to keep the Agency running, to protect our air, to protect our water, and to protect our public health.

Scott Pruitt has been making headlines at the EPA as of late, but for all the wrong reasons. From his first-class flights to his ethically questionable dealings with industry, Scott Pruitt has clearly been doing what he wants to do at EPA with little regard for the rules or for the American people. Even if Mr. Wheeler disagrees with the decisions being made by EPA's current leadership, which is something we should find out, it seems as though Scott Pruitt simply silences or isolates or reassigns any dissenters.

It is important to know how Andrew Wheeler views the chaos that has engulfed EPA in the last year, most of which is of Scott Pruitt's own making. After all, the things we have learned about the EPA over the last 2 weeks gives us a different outlook than when Leader MCCONNELL filed cloture on Andrew Wheeler's nomination just before the Easter recess. It certainly gives a different perspective than we had when Andrew Wheeler sat before the Environment and Public Works Committee last year.

It is especially important to learn how Mr. Wheeler would address Scott Pruitt's ethical lapses because it is becoming clear that my Republican colleagues, sadly, have little interest in addressing them.

This week, our colleague Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island and I sent a letter to our chairman and our friend, Senator BARRASSO, requesting a hearing on the troubling information that we received regarding Mr. Pruitt's expensive and unprecedented security detail. Chairman BARRASSO apparently does not intend to hold a hearing. I hope he will reconsider that decision.

When our top government officials fail to follow the rules, we in Congress have a constitutional duty to hold them accountable and to get to the

truth. What did Thomas Jefferson used to say? He said: If the people know the truth, they will not make a mistake. Hopefully, if we in this body know the truth, we will not either.

The legislative branch of government is a coequal branch of government. Our Founding Fathers in their wisdom designed a system where there would be checks and balances built in so that no one branch could get too far out of line, but that system only works if each branch is willing to assert its authority.

I am hardly the first person to recognize the need or the importance of congressional oversight. Many of our Senate colleagues have conducted effective oversight over the years. I have, our Presiding Officer has, and many Members of this body have.

Here is a call for increased oversight from 2010. It reads:

The legislative branch has its own responsibility to provide oversight over the executive branch agencies. . . . Our mission should be to provide oversight for the current administration to ensure integrity and transparency over policy decisions being made that affect peoples' lives today.

As issues arose in previous Congresses, previous chairmen held hearings into those matters.

Those are not my words. Those are the words of our friend, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Let me just say, that I approved this message.

Here is a call for increased oversight from, I think, April 2016. It reads:

Mr. President, like so much in Washington, D.C., the EPA has grown too big, too arrogant, too irresponsible, and too unaccountable. And people in America deserve accountability.

Again, I agree with JOHN BARRASSO.

Finally, a quote from September 2015 reads:

The agency needs to step back and rethink its priorities. . . . The Environmental Protection Agency has been out of control for far too long. It is time for Congress and President Obama to hold the EPA accountable for its failures, and it is time to rein in this runaway bureaucracy before it does more damage to our communities, to our economy, and to our country.

September 17, 2015.

Some things are too important to be held hostage by partisanship. Oversight shouldn't only be important when a Democrat is in the White House. Oversight shouldn't only be a critical component of Congress's work when Barack Obama or Gina McCarthy are in charge. Oversight of the executive branch is, in fact, our constitutional responsibility here in the Senate, and it should be constant no matter which party is in power in the Senate, the House, or in the White House. Whether an official's actions are right or wrong does not depend on where they fall on the political spectrum.

Even TREY GOWDY—a terrific Congressman from South Carolina, the Republican chair of the House Oversight Committee—recognizes the need for

oversight here, and our Republican colleagues in the Senate have an obligation to hold Mr. Pruitt to the same standards that they held officials who served in past administrations. If Lisa Jackson had been accused of even a fraction of the things it seems as though Mr. Pruitt has done, we would be holding hearings in the Dirksen Senate Office Building in the EPW hearing room every week—and we should be.

Andrew Wheeler worked as a Senate staffer. He worked for our friend George Voinovich, one of my dearest friends in my whole life. He conducted oversight throughout his career. He later worked for Senator JIM INHOFE. Andrew has worked for Members such as Senator INHOFE and Senator George Voinovich, who I know take and took seriously their oversight roles. We should be able to hear from Andrew Wheeler what his plans are to rein in the abuses at EPA before he takes over this important job.

Mr. President, I reserve the remainder of my time.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

THE FBI

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI—our Nation's premier law enforcement agency—and to speak about the men and women who distinguish it.

First, I want to refer to an opinion piece in the New York Times that talks about the former Director of the FBI, James Comey. As the article is entitled, "The Tragedy of James Comey," the story has both positive things to say about Mr. Comey—well deserved—but also some criticism, which I would suggest is also well deserved. Perhaps all of us exhibit both positive and negative attributes. All of us make mistakes, and I don't mean to pick on Mr. Comey unnecessarily, but it sort of lays the foundation for what I want to say.

In the April 8, 2018, New York Times article, the first line is, "James Comey is about to be ubiquitous." In other words, he is going to be everywhere with his book, published next week. Of course, he will be on an "epic publicity tour, including interviews with Stephen Colbert, David Remnick, Rachel Maddow, Mike Allen, George Stephanopoulos, and 'The View.'" So he will be everywhere.

Of course, we expect him to tell his story from his perspective. As a preface for what I want to say about the rank-and-file men and women in the FBI, let me just read a couple of paragraphs.

The writer says:

[Director Comey] was the F.B.I. director overseeing the investigation into Hillary Clinton's private email server. He and his team decided that she had not done anything that warranted criminal charges. And [Director Comey] knew that Republicans would blast him as a coward who was trying to curry favor with the likely future president.

So he decided to go public with his explanation for not charging Clinton and to criticize her harshly. He then doubled down, re-

leasing a public update on the investigation 11 days before the election, even as other Justice officials urged him not to. Department policy dictates that investigators aren't supposed to talk publicly about why they are not bringing charges. They especially don't do so when they could affect [the outcome of] an election.

That, as people will recall, is one of the primary reasons why Rod Rosenstein, the current Deputy Attorney General of the United States, recommended to the President that he dismiss Mr. Comey—for violating Department of Justice guidelines when it comes to talking about an investigation, which should remain confidential, particularly when there is a decision not to charge the person being investigated, and usurping the role of the prosecutor, recognizing that the role of the FBI as a primary investigator is very different. When it comes to the charging decision, that is left to the Department of Justice, not to the FBI.

But, as the article goes on to say:

Comey, however, decided that he knew better than everyone else. He was the righteous Jim Comey, after all. He was going to speak truth to power. He was also, not incidentally, going to protect his own fearless image. He developed a series of rationales, suggesting that he really had no choice. They remain unpersuasive. When doing the right thing meant staying quiet and taking some lumps, Comey chose not to.

As I said, the article has a lot of complimentary material and also some criticism, and I think it is a fair piece. I mention that because so much of what we have heard about the FBI and the Department of Justice recently has been caught up in the emotions and the drama here in Washington, DC, and while appropriate criticism and investigation of past actions at the Department of Justice should take place—former Attorney General Loretta Lynch and why she made the decision not to demand that Director Comey let the Department of Justice make the ultimate charging decision—there is a lot of room for criticism, and I suggest there will be additional information that will be forthcoming and should be produced to Congress as part of our oversight responsibilities. But I think the big mistake Mr. Comey made is assuming that he was a law unto himself and that the rules applied to everybody else but not to him and, as the article says, that he knew better than anyone else.

But all of that I want to contrast with what I experienced recently, back home in Austin where my wife and I live.

I was there during and after the series of five bombings that detonated in packages across the city, killing two people and wounding others. People were very much on edge. It reminds me of the sniper that was on the loose here in Washington, DC, for a while, and people were terrorized—not willing to go and put gasoline in their cars. There was a similar sort of effect with what happened with the bombings in Texas and in Austin.