

asymmetric approach that exploits the existing divisions and vulnerabilities of our open society, our democratic institutions, and our free markets.

Even though we are now aware of this, we have not taken the necessary steps to repair the situation. Indeed, our Nation retains a campaign finance system that empowers anonymous donors to funnel unlimited amounts of money to influence public policy at every level of government, and to hide their actions behind corporations.

This misguided system, which fell into place in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision in 2010, allegedly has been exploited by foreign adversaries to advance their agendas on our soil.

How does this threat work? Prior to *Citizens United*, an incorporated entity did not have the same right as a flesh-and-blood human being to make contributions and expenditures in elections. This distinction makes sense. Corporations typically are permanent legal entities. They can amass outsized sums of wealth and, critically, they can shield the human beings behind them from scrutiny and liability. It is easier for those who wish to circumvent the laws protecting our democratic system to do so from behind a corporate mask. Thus, when the Supreme Court gave corporations the right to make unlimited independent expenditures in elections, it also opened the door for those who wish to hide their election spending to cover their tracks with shell companies and other entities that only exist on paper.

Our Nation historically has sought to safeguard our system of government from foreign influence. The Constitution requires the President to be a natural-born citizen. Early lobbying disclosure reforms were crafted with the threat of foreign propaganda in mind. And it remains a Federal crime for a foreign national, directly or indirectly, to spend money to influence our elections. But how can we know that authorities have the tools they need to enforce the law consistently when the law permits donors to funnel unlimited sums into elections and cover their tracks with shell corporations?

There are serious allegations that foreign actors have taken advantage of this vulnerability in our system. CNN reported in early April that Special Counsel Mueller is investigating whether Russian oligarchs used donations to think tanks, political action committees, and straw donors to cover their illegal campaign spending in the 2016 cycle.

One figure who is suspected of this type of malign influence-peddling is Alexander Torshin. Torshin is the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Russia, a close Putin ally, and was recently sanctioned by the Trump administration, along with other oligarchs and high-ranking Russian Government officials. Multiple press reports stemming from documents turned over to congressional investigations by Trump

campaign associates detail how Torshin allegedly cultivated people associated with the NRA to influence the 2016 election. His ultimate goal allegedly was to arrange a meeting during the campaign between then-Candidate Trump and Putin. Press reports indicate that the FBI is currently investigating whether Torshin illegally funneled money to the NRA to assist the Trump campaign in particular.

Indeed, if Russia did use the NRA to circumvent public scrutiny of its electoral meddling, it would have been following the same pattern as the Koch network. Robert McGuire from the Center for Responsive Politics stated: "We've seen some of the groups in the Koch network give large, six and seven figure grants to the NRA—knowing that the NRA is going to spend the money on ads in an election. . . . The Russians could easily have funneled money into the NRA coffers using a similar pathway. . . . A legal, ostensibly apolitical donation to the NRA by Russia could have freed up other restricted funds to spend on politics."

While money is fungible, it is quite striking that the NRA spent over \$30 million to assist the Trump campaign—two-and-a-half times more than what it spent in 2012 to assist Mitt Romney.

These allegations regarding links between Russia and the NRA are among the most widely reported, but there is evidence of other instances where Kremlin-linked oligarchs and their allies allegedly directed money into American elections. For example, Viktor Vekselberg, another close Putin ally and oligarch who made billions from a government-sanctioned oil deal, allegedly funneled over \$250,000 through a U.S. corporation run by his cousin to spend on the 2016 election. The cousin had no prior history as a major political donor before the last election cycle. Vekselberg was also recently sanctioned by the Trump administration for his close ties to Putin and alleged role in advancing Russia's malign influence activities. Special Counsel Mueller is also reportedly investigating whether Vekselberg funneled money into the 2016 election.

These are two illustrations of how those from Putin's inner circle may have sought to influence our elections. Some of these methods may appear legal because the source of the money on paper was a person who is legally allowed to make expenditures on American elections. But experts, like Louise Shelley, director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center at George Mason University, doubt that these sums could have entered our political process without approval from the Kremlin. As she puts it: "If you have investments in Russia, then you cannot be sure that they are secure if you go against the Kremlin's will. You can't be an enormously rich person in Russia, or even hold large holdings in Russia, without being in Putin's clutches."

If sophisticated special interest groups in our country rely on dark money to pursue their political agendas, and the Kremlin and Kremlin-linked actors can exploit this vulnerability, then it stands to reason that other foreign actors can also manipulate our system. As long as we maintain a system wherein a political spender can be a corporation that received money from another corporation, which, in turn, received money from yet another corporation, there will be no accountability in our campaign finance system.

Even if it cannot be proved that illegal campaign spending is changing electoral outcomes, I believe it is unacceptable for our Nation to knowingly permit an open conduit for foreign meddling in our elections, which has an effect on our national security. Our system of government depends on public faith that election results reflect the will of the American people.

Going forward, I intend to speak further on this topic and work on ways to give authorities much stronger tools to prosecute the laundering of foreign money in our campaign finance system. In my view, this is not just an administrative or an election issue; this is a national security and international criminal issue, and as such, there should be investigations and prosecutions on that scale. I invite my colleagues to work with me on this important issue, and I thank my colleagues again for highlighting the need to take unaccountable money out of our politics.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, at 12 noon on Thursday, April 26, there be 4 minutes of debate, equally divided; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Pompeo nomination; that if cloture is invoked, all time be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation without intervening action or debate. I further ask that following disposition of the Pompeo nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Grenell nomination, with the time until 1:45 p.m. equally divided in the usual form; and that at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination. I further ask that if cloture is invoked, all time be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation without intervening action or debate; and that with respect to both nominations, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid

upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Hawaii.

#### DARK MONEY

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, in his confirmation hearing last January, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said there was evidence that climate change had actually leveled off over the past two decades.

In response to Mr. Pruitt's comments, an atmospheric scientist in California named Benjamin Santer pulled together some colleagues to study satellite data from around the world. They found that Mr. Pruitt was in fact wrong, and they prepared to publish their findings in *Nature Scientific Reports*.

Then something pretty weird happened. A few of the scientists came forward and said that they didn't want their names listed on the research. They were worried about their ability to get a green card in the United States. Mr. Santer told the *New Yorker* that this was the first time in his life that he had seen his colleagues fear putting their names on research because they were worried about the negative consequences for themselves and their families.

In this country, scientists should not work in fear. They should not worry about their work being politicized. But this is where we are, and it is a moment that has been carefully planned by a small group of people who do not want the United States to act on climate. Because of these groups, the United States is home to the only major political party that opposes climate action. Because of these groups, Scott Pruitt—a man who denies that climate change is real and that it is caused by humans—is running the Federal Agency charged with dealing with climate change.

For too long, these groups have gone unchallenged, their web of deceit untouched. So I am joining with my colleagues to shine a light on these groups and how they have warped our ability to make good choices.

The Heartland Institute was started in 1984, ostensibly by a group of Libertarians. Each of their positions boils down to the idea that the government has no role—not to work on ending tobacco use or to define what health insurance should look like. But they are especially focused on keeping the government from doing anything about climate change.

The Heartland Institute denies that climate change is happening, and I disagree with them. Ninety-seven percent of all climate scientists disagree with them. But they are not playing by the average think tank rules because they are not your normal think tank. Over the years, the Heartland Institute has gained a reputation for, as one website put it, being a mouthpiece for the cor-

porations who fund it, and their funders are very, very hard to track because Heartland keeps its donations secret. But we know that donors like the Koch brothers, ExxonMobil, and the Mercers are some of Heartland's biggest funders, and these donors just so happen to benefit from American inaction on climate.

If the government does what Heartland wants and stops protecting the environment, these people will profit. It is almost as if the Heartland Institute exists to promote the interests of its donors.

Last year, they mailed a package to hundreds of thousands of science teachers. It had pamphlets, a DVD, and a book called "Why Scientists Disagree about Global Warming." The mass mailing was an effort to disseminate fossil fuel industry talking points as curriculum for science teachers. They tried to send it to every middle school, high school, and college teacher in the country.

The institute has also done everything it can to defend Mr. Pruitt, who is being investigated for a historic number of ethical lapses. Heartland wrote a letter to the White House just recently that called on the President to continue supporting Mr. Pruitt. The letter said the 10 ethical investigations into Mr. Pruitt amount to "an orchestrated political campaign by [the President's] enemies."

Heartland also supports a new proposed EPA rule, and—get this one—it is a new EPA rule that will restrict the use of scientific studies in EPA decision making. It will restrict the use of science in EPA decision making.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, the American Lung Association, and the National Council for Science and the Environment are some of the 50 science organizations and higher education institutions that have opposed the new rule. But the Heartland Institute is for this rule.

I want to be really clear about this. This isn't about someone having a conservative ideology or different view from mine about what our energy future ought to be. There is no leftwing equivalent of the institute that acts like this. Brookings, the Center for American Progress, and other left-leaning think tanks all have dissent within their ranks, and even on the right, AEI and many others have legitimate academic discussions within the context of their political philosophy. That is not what this is. These other think tanks do not ignore scientific facts because they are real think tanks. But Heartland is not a think tank in any true sense of the word. Their work is focused not on promoting analysis based on science but on trashing analysis based on science. If you don't know that, then you can easily think they are legitimate.

For example, the Heartland Institute sends a monthly newsletter about climate issues to every legislator in the

country—State and Federal. It is actually a pretty good-looking product. This is a copy of it. It is actually really well done and well laid out in color, so it is not immediately obvious that this isn't even analysis. It looks like a publication from a scientific institution.

The people they quote or rely on for data are almost always from industry-supported think tanks funded by the same people. This month, they highlighted one of their own policy analysts who said that Oklahoma should not subsidize wind power because the industry can't survive without subsidies. They claim that wind energy is far less reliable and far more expensive than the power derived from fossil fuel. Who benefits from that analysis?

The fact is that wind energy is now the largest source of reliable electricity-generating capacity in the United States. In Oklahoma alone at least 30 percent of all power consumption comes from wind farms, and subsidies for fossil fuels are 40 times those for clean energy.

Also in their April newsletter, Heartland claims that natural gas has little effect on global temperatures. But recent evidence shows that methane emissions from oil and gas are vastly undercounted.

The temperature data on the back cover of this newsletter is from a climate denier at the University of Alabama whose data is considered unreliable and biased by the vast majority of the scientific community. This is not normal intellectual dissent within the scientific community. This is not normal political dissent about what our energy future should be. These people are propagating propaganda. This is not the work of a legitimate think tank. A legitimate think tank does not ignore facts and evidence. It does not publish data from a climate denier who is known in the science community for publishing work loaded with errors.

They are pushing us away from science and from doing the hard work of protecting and preserving our country's clean air and water so that a few of their donors can continue to make as much money as possible.

I was pleased with President Macron's speech today. There was so much he reminded us that we had in common, not just between America and France but between Democrats and Republicans. As he reminded us of our great history together, as he reminded us of our cultural exchange, as he reminded us of our military cooperation, he also reminded us that our great democracies believe in science. We have to believe in science. We have to believe in expertise. It is absolutely appropriate.

The Presiding Officer and I do not share the same political philosophy, but we have to share the same set of facts. That is what is so damaging about a so-called think tank like Heartland. They are not like AEI; they are not like CAP; they are not like Brookings. They are not like any other