

it. American power, prestige, and even our economy will be deeply damaged.

I am pleading—pleading—with my Republican colleagues to push back by doing four things:

First, ratchet up—not water down—sanctions against Russia.

Second, join us in demanding that the President's national security team immediately come to Congress and testify.

Third, end attacks by so many on the hard right on the Department of Justice, the FBI, and Special Counsel Mueller. These attacks are beyond the pale, but now that the President has done this with Putin, these attacks are dangerous to the future of the Republic.

The special counsel needs to finish his work. The President needs to sit for an interview with the special counsel, as previous Presidents have done and as Republicans demanded of President Clinton.

The President has no problem breaking bread with a man who maliciously attacked America during our elections, but he can't sit down with a man charged with investigating it—Special Counsel Mueller. Please. What is the President afraid of? What is he hiding that we don't know?

Fourth, our Republican colleagues must demand with us that the President insist that the 12 indicted Russians be sent to the United States immediately to stand trial.

Every one of these actions is important. Every one should be bipartisan. Every one of our Republican colleagues, no matter what their ideologies within the Republican Party are, should choose country over party—what is good for America over the politics of the moment. Let us show strength and not fear when President Trump shows weakness, as he has today.

I am asking Leader MCCONNELL and Speaker RYAN, both friends, to make sure the four things we have asked for are done. I am pleading with them, for the sake of the country, to do so.

The President is doing grave harm to the standing of the United States, to the strength of the United States, to the security of the United States, and to the economic robustness of the United States by kowtowing to Vladimir Putin. The President will continue to do it if he is not checked, and the best check is our Republican colleagues, if they only have the decency, the honor, and the courage to stand up at a time when the moment calls for it. Some have—Senator MCCAIN, Senator GRAHAM, and Senator SASSE—but where are the others? Where is Leader MCCONNELL?

The summit today was an insult to all Americans—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. We have to stand up together and push back.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

On a related matter, Mr. President, I wish to speak for a moment on President Trump's nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

We know President Trump promised to pick a judge who would be hostile to a woman's right to choose—to *Roe v. Wade*—and to the healthcare law, including protections for Americans with preexisting conditions. That is incredibly troubling in and of itself, but I have little doubt that every one of those 25, in the eyes of the Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation, which put together the list, would do those two things that would so hurt America in my judgment.

There is another troubling aspect of Judge Kavanaugh's nomination: His views on Presidential power and whether Presidents should be treated as though they are above the law. Judge Kavanaugh seems to take an almost monarchical view of Executive power. He has written that a sitting President should not be subject to criminal or civil investigation or prosecution while in office. He has even written that a President doesn't need to enforce a law that the President "deems" unconstitutional. It contradicts the well-settled principle—something at the heart of our Constitution and what the Founding Fathers in their greatness did back in 1789—that Presidents should not be above the law.

Now, those are dangerous beliefs at any time, but at this moment in time, with this President, those beliefs are especially dangerous. Anyone who followed the President's trip overseas and his summit today with President Putin saw a reckless, self-centered President willing to bully allies and comfort adversaries, seemingly on a whim.

President Trump's first 1½ years in office has been marked by numerous examples of the President stretching Executive authority, testing the rule of law, and the separation of powers.

Now, more than ever—and especially in light of today's events—we need a Supreme Court Justice who understands and respects the important boundaries the Constitution and our system of government place on the Chief Executive. We don't need a Justice who is ideologically predisposed to favor almost unchecked Executive power, especially with Donald Trump as President of the United States.

Judge Kavanaugh has clearly tipped his hand that he prefers to give broad deference to the Executive. Perhaps that is why Judge Kavanaugh was ultimately selected from the list of 25. That all had been given the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval by the Federalist Society, intent on repealing *Roe*, and by the Heritage Foundation, intent on rolling back government-involved healthcare, whether it be ACA, protecting preexisting conditions, or Medicaid.

Special Counsel Mueller's probe appears to be discovering more and more evidence of President Putin's interference in our election and potential cooperation of American citizens in that interference. Given that a Justice Kavanaugh could one day be faced with a ruling on the matter of whether a sit-

ting President can be indicted or subpoenaed, I hope Senators from both parties scrutinize Judge Kavanaugh's beliefs about Executive power.

On all other courts, potential defendants don't get to pick their jurors. The President—particularly this President—shouldn't have that power either.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Connecticut.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, in my lifetime, no American President has ever had a more disastrous overseas trip than the one that was just concluded by President Trump—5 days of disaster after disaster, insult after insult, capitulation after capitulation. Today, Donald Trump has America weaker in the world than at any time in recent memory.

Let's start with what just happened today that has the whole world reeling. To the shock and horror of the American public, President Trump stood on stage with Vladimir Putin and told the world that he believes Putin when Putin insists that Russia did not try to interfere in the American elections in Trump's favor in 2016.

Despite what President Trump wants us to believe these days, there are still some truths left in the world. Not everything is political spin. Not everything in the world today is up for debate. Russia did attack our elections in 2016. They plan on attacking our elections in 2018. In 2016, they did so with the explicit purpose of trying to elect Donald Trump. All 100 Senators agree on this. Every U.S. intelligence agency agrees on this. Every U.S. law enforcement agency in the country agrees on this. Everyone working for Donald Trump in his national security cabinet agrees on this.

Now, we actually have the specific names of the specific Russian individuals who carried out these attacks. They have been indicted by Donald Trump's Department of Justice. There is simply no question, no debate over whether the Russian Government engaged in a massive, willful, illegal campaign to push the 2016 election to Donald Trump. It is a fact.

President Trump, no doubt, doesn't like this fact. First, because there is an investigation that is pending right now over the outstanding question of whether he knew it was happening and whether he and his campaign team coordinated with the Russians to make that happen. There is increasing evidence that this might be the case, but we will have to wait for the Mueller report to know.

Second, without the Russians' help, it is possible that Donald Trump might not be President. We don't know this, but the slim margins where the President prevailed in certain States leave room to surmise that without Russia's help, Donald Trump might not have been elected President.

Regardless of whether Trump coordinated with the Russians and regardless

of whether their support tipped the balance, it frankly doesn't explain what just happened in Helsinki. When asked if Trump agrees with his staff, every Member of the Senate, and every law enforcement and intelligence agency in his government or Russia, he chose Russia.

Let me say that again. When asked whether the President of the United States believed his own government or Russia, our President said he believed Russia. He took sides against American national security interests, and we are left with a question of why. We raise that question because, frankly, the expectations for this summit, this meeting between the American President and the Russian leader, were very low. All President Trump had to do at that press conference today was to offer some mild pushback—an acknowledgment of Russia's interference in the election—and to stand up and, in mild terms, offer America's support for the sovereignty of Ukraine. He didn't do any of that. So we are left with this question of why.

Now I don't know what Mueller knows. I don't know what Vladimir Putin knows. But Americans should be freaked out today that there is some explanation that we don't know for why our President is so friendly to Russian national security interests and so hostile to our own.

Of course, today, my colleagues, was just the icing on the cake. We already have forgotten what happened on the first 4 days of this trip. Shortly before the meeting with Putin, Trump announced to the world that after several days of meetings and consultations with our European partners, he could definitively say that Europe was an enemy of the United States. He called the European Union a foe. That conclusion was bracketed by his comments upon his arrival in Europe, when he announced that his meeting with Putin was going to be a whole lot easier than his meetings were going to be with Europe.

Let's be clear. First, Europe is our most important friend and ally, and it has been that way for a very long time, and nothing has changed. In the last 70 years, when we have needed help in the world, the first place we turn to is Europe. It shares our democratic values. They are our most important trading partner. The post-World War II order that has ushered in an order of relative global stability never before seen in the world is reliant on the continued alliance of the United States and Europe.

We have always had our grievances. We may want them to spend a little bit more money on defense. They may want us to shoulder a little bit more of the burden with respect to the world's refugee crisis and not leave it all up to them. But the alliance is just as important as it ever has been, and Europe is just as important a partner as it ever has been.

Here is the other thing to make clear. Donald Trump's intent is to

smash the European Union and to break the United States and Europe apart from each other. His advisers and Cabinet members may go on TV or show up to hearings on Capitol Hill, and they may say all the right things about the strength of the transatlantic alliance and America's rock-solid commitment to NATO. I have heard them say it. I saw John Bolton say it on TV this weekend. I watched Secretary Pompeo come to the Foreign Relations Committee and testify to such before Congress.

But the people who work for President Trump don't set U.S. policy. The President does, and the President has made it clear over and over that NATO is temporarily functionally irrelevant.

That sounds like a radical thing to say, but let's just admit that it is true for the time being. Trump has made it crystal clear that if Russia ever perpetuated a Ukraine-style attack on a NATO country, one that was in plain sight for everybody to see but that was officially denied by the Kremlin—does that sound familiar? That is what happened in Ukraine—a clear Russian invasion but officially denied by the Kremlin. Does this sound familiar? The 2016 attacks on American elections are there for everyone to see, and they are denied by the Kremlin. Trump has made it clear that if Russia ever perpetuated an attack like that against a NATO country, Trump would believe Russia and not his own eyes, not his own government. He has telegraphed to Russia that if you simply deny the invasion or the attack, we will believe you, not our own government, not our own intelligence and security agencies. That is what he told us.

That is what would likely happen if Europe was attacked. The Europeans know this. Why we are so much weaker today is because that message to the Europeans comes with a price. If the Europeans don't feel that we are going to get their back, having watched the President mock and insult them over the course of the last 4 days, it is now in doubt as to whether they would come to our defense if we asked, as we did after the attacks on September 11.

None of our European partners will say that. They are going to try to save face. They are going to try to be the bigger party to this contest and say that the strength of the alliance is as strong as it ever has been. But it is not, and there are consequences—potentially serious ones for the United States.

For as bad a shape as the President left NATO, the EU is in no better condition today. It is in tatters in large part because of a President who continues to cheerlead those who want to break apart the EU. There are people who understand the genius of the European Union who are working hard to keep it together, and I am going to cheerlead them, but President Trump spent his time in Britain telling anybody who would listen, including the press, that unless Britain carried out a

clean break from the EU, there would be consequences from the United States. That is madness. Our policy should be the opposite—that if Britain and the EU want to reconcile, America will be there to assist.

Let's bring it back to Vladimir Putin again because his top priority—his No. 1 goal—is the dissolution of the European Union, which is his main political and economic rival on the Eurasian continent. The breakup of NATO is right up there as well. His chief ally in the deconstruction of the EU and NATO today is the President of the United States.

America is so much weaker today than we were just 5 days ago, and that is saying a lot. Our Nation and the world has never seen a more cataclysmic foreign trip than the one that we just witnessed.

This country can survive a lot. We are resilient. But President Trump is making this country a laughing stock. We used to be a pillar of strength, an example to be looked up to. Now we are the butt of jokes. We are seen as weak—a total pushover. All you need to do if you are a despot or an autocrat or an enemy of America is to get in the room with the U.S. President, and he will give you everything you want, with no price to pay.

That is America in the world today, and I couldn't be sadder about it.

I yield back.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor in support of the nomination of Scott Stump, to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

As President Trump and Secretary DeVos continue to roll back protections for students and make it easier for predatory for-profit colleges to take advantage of our students, students need someone at the Department who will remain committed to putting them first no matter what Secretary DeVos tries to pressure him to do.

Although most of the nominees President Trump has picked for the Department have pledged their allegiance to Secretary DeVos and her agenda, I believe Mr. Stump will be different. If confirmed, Mr. Stump would be responsible for advising Secretary DeVos on career and technical education, adult education and literacy, and community college education while overseeing over \$2 billion in funding to provide our students and workers with the education and skills they need to compete and get ahead in the 21st century.

Mr. Stump's resume shows he is a nominee who is qualified for this position. He has served as the assistant provost for career and technical education for the Colorado Community College System. He was elected by his peers to serve as the president of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium. He also earned the support

of a number of key stakeholders and advocacy groups.

If confirmed, Mr. Stump would be responsible for adult education and literacy, which would help adults get the basic skills they need to be productive workers and family members and citizens, and which would help community colleges ensure students have the education and skills they need to advance in their education and their careers in order to remain competitive in the 21st century.

Finally, the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the Department of Education is responsible for implementing the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. It is a critical law that gives students and workers the education and skills they need to succeed, and it provides businesses with a high-quality talent pipeline of workers with in-demand skills to compete in a 21st century economy.

Last month, members of our HELP Committee set partisan differences aside and passed the reauthorization of the Perkins CTE Act, which makes important updates to support an education system that prepares students and workers for an economy and a country that works for everyone.

In order to help students, workers, and businesses compete in a rapidly changing global economy, it is critically important that we pass that reauthorization, which would allow programs to adapt to the unique needs of their communities and continue to provide students and workers with the education and training that is necessary for them to get better jobs, earn higher wages, and climb up the economic ladder.

As Members of Congress, we should always be looking for ways to help make people's lives better, which is why I hope we can advance this long overdue bill to the floor in a timely fashion.

If the Senate confirms Mr. Stump, I hope he will remain committed to putting students and workers first no matter what pressure he gets. If he is able to do that, I look forward to working with him to help provide high-quality education and to ensure that, above all, our focus is on students and their success.

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.

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

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

All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Stump nomination?

Mrs. ERNST. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: The Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Ms. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS), the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 155 Ex.]

YEAS—85

Alexander	Feinstein	Paul
Baldwin	Fischer	Perdue
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Bennet	Gardner	Reed
Blumenthal	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Harris	Roberts
Booker	Hassan	Rounds
Brown	Hatch	Rubio
Burr	Heinrich	Sanders
Cantwell	Heitkamp	Sasse
Capito	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Hoeven	Schumer
Carper	Hyde-Smith	Scott
Casey	Johnson	Smith
Cassidy	Kaine	Sullivan
Collins	King	Tester
Coons	Klobuchar	Thune
Corker	Lankford	Tillis
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Udall
Cotton	Markey	Van Hollen
Crapo	McCaskill	Warner
Cruz	McConnell	Warren
Daines	Menendez	Whitehouse
Donnelly	Merkley	Wicker
Duckworth	Murkowski	Wyden
Durbin	Murphy	Young
Enzi	Murray	
Ernst	Nelson	

NOT VOTING—15

Boozman	Isakson	Moran
Gillibrand	Jones	Peters
Graham	Kennedy	Shaheen
Heller	Leahy	Shelby
Inhofe	McCain	Stabenow

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Idaho.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask that the Senate now proceed to Executive Calendar No. 601, as under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of James Blew, of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Department of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, due to travel issues, I was unable to attend today's rollcall vote on the nomination of Scott Stump to be Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education at the Department of Education.

Had I been able to attend, I would have supported his nomination. •

TAX REFORM

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, as you may know, I enthusiastically supported the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that passed the Senate and was signed into law 6 months ago. Over the past 6 months, the law's positive impact on our country's economy has not gone unnoticed. Companies, both large and small, are distributing bonuses, raising wages, and investing in their businesses. While many observers recognize the positive ways in which the law is increasing economic confidence and lowering rates for individual taxpayers, the benefits to small businesses are sometimes overlooked. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I strongly supported the tax law because I believed it would reduce taxes for small businesses responsible for employing millions of Americans, allowing small business owners to invest in their businesses and increase economic growth. I recently began this series of speeches to bring attention to the benefits this law provides for small businesses.

While many reports over the past 6 months focus on the new tax law's impact on large corporations, I rise today to bring attention to how tax reform is benefiting HBM Technology Partners, a small business in Reno, NV. HEM Technology Partners provides computer hardware, information technology systems, and computer services