

Back in the 1950s, it was the NAACP who took on the State of Alabama over precisely this issue. The State government tried to get their hands on the NAACP's donor list. The issue went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the NAACP won a big victory for the First Amendment.

Here is what Justice Harlan wrote in that opinion: "Inviolability of privacy and group association may in many circumstances be indispensable to preservation of freedom of association, particularly where a group espouses dissident beliefs."

He said that forcing private organizations to disclose their donors was not so different from forcing people with certain views to wear armbands or other clothing, advertising their beliefs to the world.

In both cases, the government's action would be inviting harassment and intimidation upon Americans—those whose beliefs were either unusual or unpopular or, in today's culture of intimidation, those whose beliefs the left disagrees with. The result is, more speakers stay silent, fewer Americans choose to exercise their right of free association.

It is bad enough to wield government power to chill political speech and invite harassment of citizens based on what an angry mob might assume their opinions are, based on their private financial records. It is even more egregious to pursue that nakedly political goal while calling it—believe it or not—good government.

In this country, good government means protecting citizens' First Amendment rights to participate in the competition of ideas, not trying to shut down that competition. We persuade. We don't intimidate.

So I welcome this announcement and applaud the leadership of Secretary Mnuchin and Acting IRS Commissioner David Kautter. I am glad this step will make the right of Americans to freely advocate for their strongly held beliefs less vulnerable to the malice of some in government and to the proven failures of bureaucracies. I urge continued vigilance for all of us who cherish the First Amendment.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on a different matter, it is becoming a historic year for favorable economic news. There are plenty of ways to measure how American workers, job creators, and entrepreneurs are writing a new chapter.

After nearly a decade of stagnating pay and vanishing opportunities, recent months have brought remarkable milestones. Optimism among American small businesses has reached its highest level since President Reagan's first term. Sixty-seven percent of Americans believe that now is a good time to find a quality job in the United States—the highest percentage in 17 years of Gallup polling. Just last

month, a manufacturing industry measure reported growth in 17 out of 18 sectors, from textiles to precision technologies.

It is no surprise, then, that the National Association of Manufacturers found last month that a record-high 95.1 percent of American manufacturers have a positive view of their company's outlook.

What do these numbers mean to real workers on the floor of American factories? At Mack Molding, an injection molder and contract manufacturer, with locations in Statesville, NC, and Arlington, VT, it means a \$5.4 million investment in facilities with preparations to hire 100 new workers. At Sabel Steel, based in Montgomery, AL, it means large pay raises for most of the company's 230 employees and new, more efficient equipment at facilities across the South. Both companies credit last year's historic tax reform law with helping make their 2018 success possible.

Our Democratic colleagues can talk all they like about repealing middle-class families' and job creators' historic tax cuts and sending that money back to Washington instead, but this united Republican government is proud of the new prosperity they are building. We will not let the Democrats take away their tax cut.

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. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I am at a loss for words to describe what happened yesterday in Helsinki, Finland. I am disappointed, as well, by the stunning silence of some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in response to it.

When each of us is elected to serve in Congress—the House and the Senate—we are asked to take an oath, a very serious oath. In it, we swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. The President of the United States similarly swears to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Yesterday in Helsinki, Finland, the President of the United States was engaged in an appalling display. What we saw at that press conference—standing just several feet away from Vladimir Putin, the leader of Russia—was the President's decision to turn his back on the organizations and agencies of the U.S. Government, to question their credibility, and to affirm, incredibly, that Mr. Putin had given a powerful denial to what they have found when it comes to the Russian interference in our last election.

Just days after bullying our key NATO allies and failing to publicly accept that Russia attacked our country, attacked our democracy, this administration and its enablers here in Congress are failing that oath.

President Trump refuses to accept the findings of American intelligence professionals, the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, and virtually every agency of our government that is tasked with keeping us safe and instead accepts Vladimir Putin's absurd, self-serving denials. Many of my colleagues here in Congress refuse to even speak up to denounce the President's actions.

Consider what happened months before the 2016 election when our Nation's top intelligence officials came and told key congressional leaders about the Russian cyber attack on the United States. The administration at that time, under President Obama, was deeply concerned. President Obama was looking for a bipartisan response condemning Putin's efforts in the closing days of the elections so as to avoid any hint of partisanship in the public announcement and to present a unified deterrent.

What was the response of Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL after hearing this alarming revelation that Vladimir Putin was actively interfering in our elections and trying to undermine our democracy? Senator MCCONNELL's response: No thanks. We are not going to help. And incredibly, neither the Senator nor his party did.

Is there anyone in the Senate—anyone who took the oath to protect our Nation against enemies, foreign and domestic—who thinks any of us, regardless of political party, should receive help from a foreign adversary to get elected? I hope we all agree that country must come before party. So then why do so many of my Republican colleagues remain silent in light of President Trump's open denial of the reality of Russia's involvement in our election?

Yesterday, we watched in disbelief as the President not only refused to even acknowledge the act of cyber war against the United States but, incredibly, blamed America first for our poor relationship with Russia. We watched our American President refuse to stand up to Vladimir Putin, a former KGB official, who executed one of the most breathtaking cyber attacks in history aimed at the United States and aimed at undermining the Western security alliance and our country's democracy. An American President stood on the world stage next to a tyrant—a tyrant who denies that he attacked us—and then the President of the United States repeatedly agreed with that adversary and dismissed criminal indictments of Russian Government officials responsible for the attack. The President closed with a rambling preening about his great election victory.

We have an American President who seems to be utterly incapable of saying

the obvious to Vladimir Putin. The President should say: Don't ever interfere in U.S. elections again. I don't want your help, and I don't believe your absurd denials. He refused to say that.

Compare his bizarre and dangerous comments in Helsinki with what President Ronald Reagan said before the 1988 NATO summit. Instead of bullying our closest allies, Ronald Reagan said:

Our first priority is to maintain a strong and healthy partnership between North America and Europe, for this is the foundation on which the cause of freedom so crucially depends.

Again, Ronald Reagan said:

Our first priority is to maintain a strong and healthy partnership between North America and Europe, for this is the foundation on which the cause of freedom so crucially depends.

There is at least one Republican Senator who is not silent. My friend and a great American patriot, JOHN MCCAIN, said this yesterday about the Helsinki press conference:

Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American President in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. . . . President Trump proved not only unable, but unwilling to stand up to Putin. He and Putin seemed to be speaking from the same script as the President made a conscious choice to defend a tyrant against the fair questions of a free press, and to grant Putin an uncontested platform to spew propaganda and lies to the world.

I could not agree more. It is obvious. We, all of us, Democrats and Republicans, should agree with what JOHN MCCAIN said.

Despite President Trump's shameful denials of Russian interference at yesterday's farce of a press conference, the evidence is clear: Russia did interfere in the 2016 election. Our intelligence agencies and the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee have concluded that not only did Russia interfere in our elections through cyber attacks, but they did so to harm Hillary Clinton, help elect Donald Trump, and undermine our democratic process.

When Donald Trump hears those words, it sends him into a rage. He denies any Russian interference for fear that it might reflect on his victory in the election. There is no evidence that has been produced to date that shows that Russian interference changed the outcome of that election. I am not questioning whether Donald Trump won the Electoral College and became President, but I don't think he should question whether the Russians were trying to undermine that process.

During his ongoing investigation into Russian meddling, Special Counsel Mueller has so far indicted 32 individuals and 3 companies on a total of 191 criminal charges. This includes the February indictment of 13 Russian trolls who engaged in a multiyear effort to influence our election, to support the election of Donald Trump by

sowing discord and inflaming social tensions online.

The Mueller investigation includes 12 members of the Russian military intelligence, specifically named, who were indicted last Friday for engaging in a sustained operation to hack into the emails, accounts, and computer networks of the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign.

These Russians also created online personas and worked with WikiLeaks to publish the stolen documents. To cover their tracks, they committed identity theft, engaged in money laundering, and at one point leased a computer in my home State of Illinois to store and move the stolen documents through encrypted channels.

Additionally, the Russians hacked into the computer networks of election officials and vendors in order to steal voter data and other information. The indictment, produced by Special Counsel Mueller, mentions that the Russians "hacked the website of a state board of elections . . . and stole information related to approximately 500,000 voters, including names, addresses, partial social security numbers, dates of birth, and driver's license numbers." This was, presumably, in reference to the Illinois State Board of Elections, which we already knew was one of the first victims of a successful Russian cyber attack—a Russian cyber attack that President Donald Trump refuses to believe ever happened.

We know that Russia meddled in the 2016 election, and we know that we should be gearing up for Russia to interfere with the 2018 midterm election as well. Just this past weekend, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, my former Republican Senate colleague from the State of Indiana and a man for whom I voted for this position and whom I respect very much, reiterated the ongoing threat that Russia presents, saying: "In regard to state actions, Russia has been the most aggressive foreign actor—no question—and they continue their efforts to undermine our democracy."

What a departure from what President Trump said in Helsinki yesterday. His own Director of National Intelligence has refuted the statement he made to the world yesterday, agreeing with the "powerful statement" of Vladimir Putin's that he had nothing to do with an attack on our election. Our President is cozying up to Vladimir Putin at the expense of the credibility of his own Director of National Intelligence. Why is this happening?

Instead of condemning President Trump and supporting the Special Counsel's efforts of getting to the bottom of this, sadly, the vast majority of congressional Republicans are actively working to undermine the investigation.

Just last week, Senate Republicans confirmed the nomination of Brian Benczkowski to serve as Assistant At-

torney General in charge of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. They voted for Mr. Benczkowski to be in charge of 600 Federal prosecutors despite the fact that Mr. Benczkowski, as a lawyer, has never been in a trial—never. He has never been in a courtroom and has never been in a trial. He was named by President Trump to head up the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice. That may not be the worst part.

Mr. Benczkowski, in his private law practice in Washington, also chose to represent a Russian bank, the Alfa-Bank, which has deep ties to Vladimir Putin. This is despite the fact that when he was called on it, he said he would not commit to recusing himself from this Russia investigation.

Furthermore, this vote occurred as President Trump and House Republicans had been looking for an excuse to fire Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, who is overseeing the Mueller investigation. Should Rosenstein be fired, Mr. Benczkowski could be easily tasked by the President to oversee the Russia investigation. That would be an unmitigated legal disaster.

Enough is enough. Today is the day that, I hope, my colleagues—Democrat and Republican alike—will step forward and speak up.

The world is still reeling from the comments that were made yesterday in Helsinki by the President of the United States of America. There are serious questions from our longtime NATO allies—those who count on the United States for the safety and security of their republics. There are serious questions in their minds about who we are, what we stand for, the relationship between this President and Vladimir Putin—a relationship which is absolutely inexplicable in that President Trump would refuse to concede the obvious—that Vladimir Putin is setting out to undermine our values in the world.

President Trump should stand with the brave men and women of law enforcement, intelligence, and the Department of Defense who have warned him about Vladimir Putin, and he should not be so easily swept away with these meetings he has.

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. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President: