

a judicial nominee “about a specific case that might come before them.” That is exactly the Ginsburg rule.

I expect, if Judge Kavanaugh wants to be on the Supreme Court not only for the sake of being on the Supreme Court, getting there, but also to serve the role he ought to serve as an impartial Justice, that he is going to follow the Ginsburg rule when he comes before my Judiciary Committee. I implore my colleagues not to try to extract assurances about how he will rule in specific cases in exchange for a confirmation vote, because they ought to get the answer from Kavanaugh that Ginsburg would give and, as far as I know, every one of the nominees since then.

The only question that matters is this: Does Judge Kavanaugh strive to apply the law as written by Congress, regardless of his personal views? From what I know about Judge Kavanaugh—and I haven’t gone through all of his 300 opinions yet that he has written as a circuit judge, but the answer appears to be yes.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is one thing we have been able to rely on over the past half century or so, it is Democratic hysteria over Republican Supreme Court nominations. No sooner does a Republican President announce a nomination than the Democrats are off and running. It doesn’t matter who the nominee is—the playbook is the same. The Democrats warn that equal rights are in jeopardy; that our system of government may not survive; in fact, that Americans may not survive. That is right. In the lead-up to Justice Gorsuch’s confirmation, the head of one liberal organization stated that there was “substantial evidence” that if Gorsuch’s “egregious views were to become law, Americans’ lives . . . would be put at risk in untold ways.” I am happy to report that a year into Justice Gorsuch’s tenure on the Supreme Court, Americans seem to be doing OK.

Fast-forward to Judge Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court nomination, and once again, Democrats are predicting that the sky will fall if a Republican President’s Supreme Court nominee is confirmed.

Faced with an eminently well-qualified, mainstream nominee, they have been forced to resort to distortions or outright conspiracy theories to make their case. Their statements have been so extreme that they have already been called out more than once by the mainstream media.

The New York Times—not exactly known as an apologist for the Repub-

lican Party—published a fact check with the headline “Democrats Overstate Kavanaugh’s Writings on the Affordable Care Act.”

The Washington Post published a fact check that described a Democratic characterization of Kavanaugh as “extreme distortion.” Two tweets offering a truly absurd conspiracy theory about Justice Kennedy’s resignation received four Pinocchios from the Washington Post—a rating that qualifies the tweets as “whoppers.”

At the root of Democrats’ frenzy is their belief that the only good Supreme Court Justice is a Supreme Court Justice who shares their political beliefs and who will rule in support of them. That is a very disturbing point of view. Our system of government is based on the rule of law, but the rule of law depends on having judges who will rule based on the law and the facts, not on their personal opinions.

Once judges start ruling based on their political opinions or their feelings about what they would like the law to be, then we will have replaced the rule of law with the rule of individual judges. That is exactly what Democrats are pushing for. They are looking for Supreme Court Justices who will rule based not on the law but their personal beliefs. More specifically, they are looking for judges who will rule based on Democrats’ beliefs. Just look at the Democrats’ statements since Judge Kavanaugh’s nomination. Democrats aren’t interested in whether Judge Kavanaugh is qualified or will rule in accordance with the law; instead, they are concerned about his views on specific issues and whether those views line up with Democrats’ opinions.

Democrats want a Supreme Court that will ratify the opinions of the Democratic Party, whether or not those opinions are in line with the law or the Constitution. Of course judges have political opinions. Of course judges have personal feelings. When you are a judge, your job is to leave those things at the courtroom door. Your job is to judge based on the law and the facts, even when you don’t like—especially when you don’t like the outcome. As Justice Gorsuch has said, “A judge who likes every outcome he reaches is very likely a bad judge—stretching for results he prefers rather than those the law demands.”

I don’t know how Judge Kavanaugh would rule on the cases he would face as a member of the Supreme Court, but I do know that in each and every case, he would look not for the results he prefers but for those the law demands.

In a 2017 speech at Notre Dame Law School, Judge Kavanaugh said:

I believe very deeply in those visions of the rule of law as a law of rules, and of the judge as umpire. By that, I mean a neutral, impartial judiciary that decides cases based on settled principles without regard to policy preferences or political allegiances or which party is on which side in a particular case.

That is it. That is the job of a judge—to serve as the umpire, to call the balls

and strikes, not rewrite the rules of the game.

When you are considering a candidate for Congress, political opinions, like those the Democrats are demanding, matter. When it comes to judges, there are really only two important questions: First, is this judge well qualified? Second, does this person understand the proper role of a judge? When it comes to Judge Kavanaugh, the answer to both questions is yes. His qualifications are outstanding. He is a graduate of Yale Law School. He clerked for a Supreme Court Justice. He is a lecturer at Harvard Law School. Most importantly, as a judge on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, he has handed down thoughtful, well-respected decisions that reveal his deep respect for the law and the Constitution and his understanding that it is a judge’s job to interpret the law, not to legislate from the bench.

It is unfortunate that Democrats’ belief that the only good judges are liberal judges is preventing them from giving an outstandingly qualified nominee like Judge Kavanaugh a fair hearing. There is still time for them to abandon their partisan political opposition and take a real look at Judge Kavanaugh’s qualifications for the Supreme Court. I hope they will.

Mr. President, 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. SCHUMER. Mr. 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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I join with my colleagues this afternoon to talk about the President’s deeply embarrassing and disgraceful meeting with President Putin yesterday.

But first, allow me to comment on what we just heard from the President. A few minutes ago, President Trump seemed to say that he accepts the findings of the intelligence community that Russia meddled in our election. Well, welcome to the club, President Trump.

We have known since the middle of the 2016 election that they meddled. For the President to admit it now is cold comfort to a disturbed public that has watched him bend over backward to avoid criticizing Putin directly. President Trump may be trying to squirm away from what he said yesterday, but it is 24 hours too late—and in the wrong place—for the President to take a real stance on Putin’s election meddling.

Amazingly, President Trump, after reading his statement that he accepted the intelligence community’s conclusion that Putin meddled in our election, added, in his own words, “could be other people also. A lot of people out there.” This is just like Charlottesville. He made a horrible statement,

tried to back off, but couldn't even bring himself to back off. It shows the weakness of this President. It shows the weakness of President Trump—that he is afraid to confront Mr. Putin directly. Like a coward, he tries to squeal away from it when he is several thousand miles away.

What is President Putin going to take out of the President's actions today? That the man is weak, that he is afraid, that he is cowardly, and that Putin will feel he can take even further advantage of Donald Trump.

The President is now asking the American people not to believe their own eyes and ears about what he told the world in Helsinki yesterday. Even in his completely implausible effort to “correct” his own words, he departed from his text to again claim that the hacking could have been done by someone other than Russia. If the President can't say directly to President Putin “Mr. Putin, you are wrong and we are right; our intelligence agencies are right,” it is ineffective, and worse, it shows such weakness. It tells President Putin to continue to take advantage of the United States because President Trump doesn't have the courage, the strength, maybe not even the conviction to say to President Putin's face what he tried to say a few minutes ago.

The President's comments a moment ago changed very little. The question still remains: What will the Senate do in response? I have seen a few of my Republican colleagues shrug their shoulders, claiming they have done all they can. That is bunk. As Senators, we have a responsibility and an ability—an incredible power given to us by the Founding Fathers to check and balance this President.

As I said this morning, here are a few things the Senate can do immediately in response to the President's disastrous summit. We can ratchet up sanctions on Russia, not water them down. Sanctions we passed 98 to 2 have not even been fully implemented by the Trump administration. And now someone has inserted a loophole to water them down in the House defense legislation.

Second, our Republican colleagues need to immediately join us in demanding public testimony from the President's national security team that was in Helsinki. Secretary Pompeo, DNI Director Coats, Ambassador Huntsman, and anybody else who was part of that team ought to be testifying openly, publicly, and directly to Congress. We need to know this because, as frightening and damaging as the President's comments were to the public in Helsinki, what he said behind closed doors is, in all likelihood, even worse. Why did the President want to close the doors? There are lots of explanations. None of them are good. Does anyone believe that President Trump was tougher on Putin in secret? Why else did he not want anyone in the room?

Next, where are the notes from that meeting? What did the President agree

to? Can we have the translator come in and testify? Was Secretary of State Pompeo briefed afterward on what happened? Did he take notes? Were any other members of the President's team briefed? The notes need to be turned over to Congress immediately.

I am calling on Leader MCCONNELL and his Republican leadership team to immediately request a hearing with Pompeo, Coats, Huntsman, the rest of the President's national security team in Helsinki, and with the translator, so we can learn the full extent of what happened behind closed doors. Our national security is at risk. It is an unusual request for unusual times.

Next, our Republican friends must end attacks on the Justice Department, the FBI, particularly the special counsel, and let the investigation proceed unimpeded. The best way to do this is to pass the legislation, authored by a bipartisan group led by Senators COONS and BOOKER on our side and Senator TILLIS and GRAHAM on the Republican side, which passed out of the Judiciary Committee.

Leader MCCONNELL, if you are serious about checks and balances, if you are serious about making sure President Trump obeys the law and protects our security, put that bill on the floor now. It will pass.

Fourth, the President must release his tax returns and insist that the 12 Russians indicted for election interference are handed over. The President has refused to release his tax returns, but these bizarre actions he has taken seem to indicate that President Putin has something over President Trump, something personal, and it might be financial. We need to see the tax returns.

Finally, we must move the election security legislation immediately. Senator KLOBUCHAR has bipartisan legislation. Senator VAN HOLLEN has bipartisan legislation. Senator HARRIS has legislation. We need to move it. Leader MCCONNELL has talked about it a little bit. Let's move it quickly, but remember, the President still has control because the Director of National Intelligence has the ability to put out this report, and he is, after all, a Presidential appointee. I have some faith in the integrity of Mr. Coats, but he may not even be there after November, particularly given the way President Trump treats his appointees. So that legislation is good and necessary, but hardly sufficient.

I hope our Senate will move; I hope our Republican colleagues will not just talk the talk, but walk the walk. “Tsk, ts” is not enough when national security is at stake. Action—bipartisan action—is required.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise to follow my leader and talk about this issue of great importance.

Let me begin with something I cherish. I have a photo, taken on December 1, 2016, of one of my children in snowy

fields in Lithuania in a U.S. military operation with NATO troops called Operation Iron Sword. The photo is of my son taking the oath of office to become a captain in the United States Marine Corps. He was deployed with 1,200 members of his battalion on the border of Russia between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, to protect America against a nation that General Joe Dunford, the head of our Joint Chiefs of Staff, describes as our principal adversary. These 1,200 young men and women were deployed far from home, working together with a nation on the Russian border to protect them and to protect our country.

My son was not alone with the Marines; there were also troops from many NATO nations and Lithuania and troops from other service branches of the United States. I hope you will forgive me for being a little bit Marine-centric.

The Marine motto “Semper Fidelis” means “always faithful,” but I think that motto applies not just to marines but to all who wear the uniform in the United States, certainly those helping the European allies counter Russian aggression and those 1.3 million people on Active Duty today—“always faithful.”

After the last week, a very profound question has been raised. While our troops can carry that and meet that “always faithful” standard, I think we have some significant questions about this President. Would he meet the same standard—“Semper Fidelis,” “always faithful”? Would he meet it for this country? Will the Senate meet the “always faithful” standard?

In the President's first year and a half in office, exercising the responsibility to be a Commander in Chief, I would say he has been a bit more of a “disruptor in chief.” We have had Presidents of both parties since the beginning of the 20th century—Presidents Wilson, FDR, President Truman, President Reagan, other Presidents of both parties—who always tried to be Commanders in Chief, who tried to be builders of security, builders of alliances. That is not the path the current President has taken. He has tried to be more of a disruptor.

He has pulled America out of a diplomatic deal with Iran that allied nations in the International Atomic Energy Agency said Iran was complying with. I am not aware of the United States ever unilaterally backing out of a deal when there was a consensus that the other nations were complying with it.

He has pulled us out of a climate accord that we reached with other nations in Paris.

He has unilaterally decided that the United States would be the only hold-out nation not participating in a U.N. global compact on migration to try to deal with the problem of migrants around the world.

He has loved to name-call our allies. It was shameful last week on his trip

to Europe that, essentially sitting in Prime Minister Theresa May's front office, he trashed her—one of our great allies. He trashed Angela Merkel, and he has done this before to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Prime Minister of Australia. Important allies of the United States have found themselves being name-called by this petty man. He has undercut valuable U.S. alliances. He described last week the European Union and Europe as our principal foe. He has repeatedly described NATO as obsolete. He has now launched trade wars against allies of the United States, asserting that national security demands that he do so.

The Presiding Officer and I were together in a meeting with the Canadian Foreign Minister in the last couple of weeks. She looked us in the eye and asked: Do you know how insulting it is that you would describe Canada—with the longest, undefended border in the world with another country, your ally in every war since the War of 1812, whose troops are serving side by side with Americans in Afghanistan, and who are fighting ISIS in Iraq today—as a national security threat?

We heard the same thing from Germany's Foreign Minister in the aftermath of this parade of insults against our allies last week. In the aftermath of using a national security waiver against our allies, the German Foreign Minister said just yesterday—and these should be painful words for anybody who cares about this country—that the United States is no longer a reliable ally.

To top all of this off, if there is a new low—and it may be debased even further tomorrow—it is the President's performance of standing next to Vladimir Putin, whose aggression against other nations, including the United States, has put troops, like my son, on the Russian border to work with allies halfway around the world—far from their families, far from their homes—and taking Putin's side over that of patriotic Americans who are working in our national security establishment and who have unanimously concluded that Russia attacked our 2016 election.

For him to say “Well, my people say they did, but he says they didn’t; I can’t see why Russia would,” what an abomination to all of the hard-working Americans who are with agencies like the CIA and the FBI and with other national security agencies who have reached a consensus opinion that Russia cyber attacked the integrity of our elections. To have watched this President stand on the stage publicly and say that he believed Vladimir Putin over patriotic Americans who were doing this work was a new low. They attacked us.

A President who would say there are good people on both sides of a White supremacy rally when there were three people killed in Charlottesville, VA, including two State Troopers I knew, is the same President who would stand next to a dictator who attacked us and

take his side over the side of American security professionals.

So I return to the question. The Americans who wear the uniform, whether they be marines or not, are always faithful. The President's performance, especially in the last week, raises deep questions about whether he meets that standard. Yet I think, for purposes of today, as I conclude, the question has to be: Will the Senate meet the standard?

I don't expect anyone in the administration to check this bad behavior. Some may encourage the President to do differently. Some may try to check the bad behavior, but I don't think they will be able to. I think we would be naive, frankly, to think that the House of Representatives would check the bad behavior. The fact that the Select Committee on Intelligence's investigation on the House side has gone off the rails suggests that it will not.

The question is posed pretty starkly, and it sits directly on our shoulders: Will the U.S. Senate take the steps to protect this country from the destruction we are seeing right now?

There needs to be a briefing of the Senate as to what was going on last week and what was discussed with Vladimir Putin and what could be the justification for the horrible capitulation we saw.

We need to do all we can to protect the Mueller investigation and let it reach its end point so we know who was culpable and how to protect our elections. The Russians who have invaded our election system need to be extradited to the United States. The administration needs to implement the sanctions legislation that this body passed by 98 to 2.

We also need to grapple with election security questions. I was a mayor and a Governor with boards of elections that ran elections, and no one has confidence that this President and this administration will protect American elections.

As I close, I will just say—and I have not said it in the time I have been in the Senate, and I hope I never say it again—that I think this issue and this time may well be one of the most important moments in the history of the entire U.S. Senate. We will either rise to the occasion and will show that we are always faithful or we will not. I hope we will.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, back in the day when I was a trial lawyer and we had had a witness come to the stand who had made a big mistake—who had said something that would hurt your case or, maybe, even decide it the wrong way or who had misrepresented someone—you went through a period of rehabilitating the witness, which meant, basically, asking friendly questions and trying to get that witness back into a credible position. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

This afternoon, President Trump attempted to rehabilitate himself for his performance in Helsinki, Finland.

The President said:

While I had a great meeting with NATO, raising vast amounts of money, I had an even better meeting with Vladimir Putin of Russia. Sadly, it is not being reported that way—the Fake News is going Crazy!

I don't think that comment is going to rehabilitate President Trump from his performance in Helsinki. It was sad, heartbreaking, and, in many ways, infuriating to think that he stood within a few feet of this Russian tyrant and said he believed that man, Vladimir Putin, more than he believed the intelligence agencies—the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice—of the United States of America. That was what he said, and it was a moment that will not easily be forgotten. It is not something he can talk his way out of.

He made similarly incoherent and jarring comments moments ago in an apparent damage control event. He went so far as to say that our NATO allies “were thrilled” with his recent visit during which he bullied and belittled them.

In some moments, the President loses touch with reality. He believes that we are suffering from national amnesia and that we can't remember what happened yesterday or last week. We remember. The reason we remember is that it is such a dramatic departure from the conduct of previous Presidents and that it is such a dramatic departure from the history of the United States. I think our President's sense of history reaches back to the day before yesterday and not far beyond.

He does not realize, as President Reagan said so often, that our NATO alliance is critical to the security of the United States and to our European friends and to the world. He just doesn't get it. He doesn't understand why that alliance is so critical. He belittles it. He bullies the members. He picks some of our strongest allies and decides to make them spectacles of his performance. That doesn't make it any easier for them to continue to stand by our side, and it, certainly, doesn't put them in a position of trusting us in the future if they desperately need us.

My mother was born in Lithuania, in the Baltics. I have been there many, many times. They are great little countries—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—and next-door, Poland. They have seen a lot over the years. They have been overrun by Nazis and Communists, and they have seen their freedoms be eliminated under autocratic rule. They believed, when they finally restored democracy about 25 or 30 years ago, that their only chance—their only guarantee of any future—was going to be with the NATO alliance, with becoming part of Europe—with becoming part of this great alliance with the United States.

Last night, I was with Gordon Smith, a former Senator from Oregon. We both

remembered a visit to Lithuania in 1999 where there was this rally, this small rally, in one of the public streets in Lithuania. It was a NATO rally or, as they called it, "GNAT-OH." They were chanting in Lithuanian how much they wanted to be part of NATO. They understood then and they understand today that the NATO alliance is Lithuania's ticket to freedom, that the NATO alliance is its insurance policy. The NATO alliance gives it hope that there will not be another generation of Lithuanians who will live in suppression and chains.

When the President belittles this and suggests that, perhaps, the Baltics are on the table when he talks of Vladimir Putin, it strikes fear in the hearts of God-fearing people who basically can still remember what it means to be under the heel of the Communist leadership of Moscow. The President just doesn't get it. He does not understand the importance of it. He, certainly, doesn't understand Vladimir Putin. To think that he would allow Putin to use what he called "powerful words" and deny what we already know to be true says that the President is very gullible.

What is it about this relationship between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin? How can you explain this? Why would a President of the United States be bowing and scraping to this Russian tyrant—to a man who has a dismal record when it comes to human rights, to a man who led his troops in the invasion of the nation of Georgia and who invaded Ukraine and who took over Crimea, to a man who set up a situation in Syria in which innocent people would die and in which their own tyrant would succeed, to a man who invaded our election process as he did?

I guess what we are looking for now, as our minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, said earlier, is an accounting of what actually happened in Helsinki. This disastrous meeting between President Trump and Vladimir Putin needs to be fully explained to the American people. I join with Senator SCHUMER in calling for hearings with the President's Helsinki team—with Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State, and with Dan Coats, the Director of National Intelligence and a man I greatly respect, who showed a steel spine this last week as he witnessed the President's turning on him and the intelligence community, and with Mr. Huntsman, our Ambassador to Moscow. They should all be coming to Washington quickly to explain what happened and how to repair the damage created by President Trump.

We need to see a transcript of the one-on-one meeting with President Trump and Vladimir Putin. If he were so deferential in his public press conference with Vladimir Putin, what did our President say to Putin behind closed doors? It is not too much for the American people to ask for an accounting.

We need to make sure that the Republicans will join us in protecting the

Office of Special Counsel. So far, Robert Mueller's investigation has led to the indictments of 32 individuals, and 5 have already pled guilty. The latest included 12 Russian intelligence agents who were specified by name as being involved in the efforts to undo our election.

We also need something that is very basic and, I think, that all of us have now come to realize is essential. President Donald Trump can no longer refuse to disclose his income tax returns. He did it throughout the campaign. He has refused to make a disclosure since. We need to know his financial relationship with Russia and Vladimir Putin's oligarchs. There has to be more to the story than we know today, and it is time for this President to come clean.

Finally, we need to press for election security legislation. We live in a dangerous moment. I also agree with former Senator Dan Coats. It is a moment at which the Russians will try to take advantage of us.

My last plea will be to my colleagues who have not spoken out clearly on this subject—not to the Presiding Officer, because he has spoken out, and I respect him so much. We need them to come forward and make it clear on a bipartisan basis that we stand together when it comes to foreign policy, the values of this Nation, and the security of the United States. We understand that Vladimir Putin has been a tyrant who has really made life miserable and who has killed many innocent people in his rage against the West and against the United States.

Most of all, we need more Republican Senators who will join with those in the past who have stepped forward and put country first over party. I remember reading the history of the Nixon years and the breaking point. The breaking point finally occurred when people like Republican Senator Barry Goldwater, of Arizona, stood up and said: "There are only so many lies you can take, and now there has been one too many." He joined with several other Republican Senators and went down to the White House and sat face-to-face with President Richard Nixon. They sat directly in front of him and explained that enough was enough.

It will take that. It will take that again for Republican Senators to have the courage to meet with this President and tell him he has to stop giving away the heritage, the values, and the legacy of the United States of America.

Those courageous Americans back in that day were, of course, talking about lies, corruption, obstruction of justice, and dangers to our democratic system. They took the oath of office. It is the same one we have taken to protect the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and to, certainly, put party second to our obligations to our Nation.

For their courage, we and history owe them a debt of gratitude. Since yesterday's fiasco with Putin, only one

Republican has spoken specifically on the Senate floor about this crisis. He was joined by the most eloquent statement by JOHN MCCAIN, who, because of illness, could not be physically present. That is it. It is not enough.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to urge this body to uphold our solemn responsibility to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States and to protect the Nation from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

I have long believed the President's words and actions have undermined our national interests and our values, but yesterday felt different.

As someone who has sat for 26 years on the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it was a day of infamy in the history of our foreign policy.

Yesterday, the American people witnessed a supplicant President of the United States capitulate to a brutal foreign leader on the world stage. Far from standing up to Putin, President Trump was unable to even acknowledge Russia's attack in 2016 and the continued threat it poses today. Instead, the President reverted to his own insecurities about his electoral victory and disturbingly subverted the work of the men and women who lead our intelligence community.

I shouldn't have to repeat this, but I will, and I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are as unequivocal as well. Seventeen—seventeen—U.S. intelligence agencies together assessed that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a sophisticated influence campaign aimed at the 2016 Presidential election. Yet the President said he had "no reason to believe" Russia interfered, and I have no reason to believe what he tried to clean up today.

Those statements directly contradicted statements from then-CIA Director Mike Pompeo—who is now the Secretary of State—the U.S. Vice President, Michael Pence, and the Director of U.S. National Intelligence.

The President said:

I have great confidence in my intelligence people, but I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today. And what he did is an incredible offer; he offered to have the people working on the case come and work with their investigators—

With respect to the 12 military intelligence officers that the special counsel indicted—

I think that is an incredible offer.

The only incredible thing about that offer is that the President of the United States would invite the perpetrator of the crime to help with the investigation. That is incredible.

Every time President Trump failed to stand up to Vladimir Putin felt like a collective punch in the gut of the American people. It was disturbing and saddening to see the leader of the free world shrink in the face of a dictator.

Just as disturbing is, we have no idea what transpired between President Trump and Putin during their secretive, lengthy meeting. What could the President need to discuss with President Putin for 2 hours with no other advisers present? If President Trump said such appalling things in public, Lord knows what he would have said to Putin in private. We deserve to know what was said and what was agreed to. We can't afford to be blindsided or outmaneuvered.

Just today, the Russian Ministry of Defense publicly stated it is preparing to start implementing an agreement that the President apparently struck in Helsinki with President Putin—an agreement that neither Congress nor the American people have been informed about.

President Trump, to adequately protect America's interests, we need to know what commitments you made to Putin. What specific topics did you discuss? What were the suggestions President Putin made to you? Did you discuss any changes to international security agreements, and, if so, what were they? Did you advocate for the extradition of the 12 Russian intelligence officers indicted last Friday? Did you make any commitments to the U.S. role regarding Syria? Did you press Russia to return to compliance with the INF Treaty and halt its nuclear threats against Europe? Did you discuss U.S. sanctions on Russia, including CAATSA sanctions that this body passed 98 to 2? If so, did you commit to any action?

Did you call upon President Putin to withdraw from Crimea and eastern Ukraine so both areas can be returned to the sovereign Government of Ukraine or did you ultimately give up on Crimea?

Did you discuss NATO military exercises scheduled for this fall? Did you agree to roll back or change the nature of those exercises? Did you discuss U.S. security assistance to Ukraine and make any concessions regarding their continuation?

Did you raise the issue of political prisoners with President Putin, including that of Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian filmmaker who has been detained for 4 years on a hunger strike?

What, if anything, did you commit to? We need to know.

The President keeps saying having a good relationship with Russia would be a good thing. Of course, having good relationships with countries, in general, is a good thing, but those relationships must be grounded in trust, in cooperation, in the values we share—values like human rights, democracies, self-governance, and individual freedom.

We do not share values with a country that attacks our elections and, by doing so, seeks to undermine our democracy. We do not share values with a country that invades its sovereign neighbors and engages in a brutal war with Ukraine. We do not share values with a country that bolsters the Butch-

er of Damascus and is complicit in war crimes in Syria. We do not share values with a country that assassinates political opponents and jails journalists. We do not share values with a country that continuously violates the international order. We do not share values with Russia under Putin.

We take oaths when we are sworn into office. President Trump did as well. Yesterday's behavior, from my view, was an abdication of that oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.

We have reached a terrible and historic low point in the United States. An American President, it seems, has teamed up with Russian intelligence against our democracy, our FBI, our Justice Department, and our intelligence community.

Our President is more closely aligned with Vladimir Putin than he is with his own government. It is unfortunate we have come to expect this behavior. President Trump has made his fixation on Putin and his affinity for authoritarians crystal clear, and America is weaker because of it. The question is, Are Senate Republicans OK with this? Except for the Presiding Officer and one or two other colleagues, from the silence of many or the feeble comments of others, I would say so.

Are they willing to concede Russian policy to President Trump? Is the price of letting this President surrender to a brutal dictator in Moscow some corporate tax cuts and a Supreme Court seat?

Tweeting about being “troubled”—troubled—is shamefully inappropriate. Signing on to symbolic measures that carry no force of law is a joke, and remaining silent in the face of betrayal is nothing less than complicity.

It is time the Republican-led Congress live up to its constitutional responsibilities. If this Senate is to respond appropriately, here is what we must immediately do, starting this week:

First, the Foreign Relations Committee; the Armed Services Committee, of which my distinguished colleague is the ranking Democrat; and the Intelligence Committee, of which my distinguished colleague is a member, must hold hearings on what happened in Helsinki. We have a right and a responsibility to know what transpired between Trump and Putin and how it affects American citizens. We have the power to compel the administration to provide that information; we just need to use it.

Second, the Senate must protect the Mueller investigation and prevent interference by President Trump. The President is laying the groundwork to fire the special counsel. We can't let that happen. It is our responsibility to protect the integrity of our institutions.

Third, the Senate must conduct real oversight of the Russia sanctions that were signed into law last August. As I have said repeatedly on this floor, the

Trump administration is ignoring several mandatory provisions of the law—mandatory. In all of the sanctions that I have helped write, this is one of the first times the Congress came together and didn't give the President waivers because they were concerned about what he would do vis-a-vis Russia, and look at this—maybe that foresight was very clairvoyant.

I and other Democrats have spoken out. We have sent several letters. We continuously urged administration officials to implement the sanctions. Where are the Senate Republicans, including all of those who voted for this bill, except for one? Silent.

If you want to stand up to Putin, if you want to stand up against Trump's capitulation in Helsinki, then we need to press the administration to finally implement what is already in the law—what is already in the law. We should do so today.

Fourth, we need to protect ourselves here at home, since it is clear we have a President who will not. The Senate needs to take up and pass the Protecting the Right to Independent and Democratic Elections Act I introduced last month. There are also measures by Senators WARNER, KLOBUCHAR, and others that would bolster our electoral defenses.

President Trump's intelligence community has repeatedly warned that the Kremlin's dangerous interference in U.S. democracy is continuing. Just days ago, the Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, said the warning signs are “blinking red” of further Russian cyber attacks. He noted that we are under literal attack. Yet instead of marshaling a whole-of-government response, President Trump remains fixated on protecting his fragile ego.

Today is the fourth anniversary of the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight 17 over eastern Ukraine by Russian-supported separatists, which killed all 298 people on board—a devastating reminder of the real dangers of the Kremlin's brutal targeting of civilians and why our relations with Russia have been strained.

Yesterday, Putin said the ball is in America's court. Well, it is time we take our shot. It is time we show the American people and the world what it means to put country over party. It is time to show the American people that we can be patriots and not just partisans; that we will stand by our allies and stand up to our adversaries; that we will defend our democracy, our institutions, and the values that truly make America great.

Our President has proven too weak, too egotistical, too feckless, or maybe too compromised to do it. It is up to us.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, as I and many of my colleagues feared, the Trump-Putin summit was disastrous,

and their press conference amounted to a disinformation operation in which President Trump played the willing participant. The propaganda, dissembling, and denials are part of Russia's hybrid operations against our country, our allies, and our partners that are an ongoing and persistent threat to our national security.

By failing to challenge Putin's fabrications on Russia's interference with U.S. democracy, its annexation of Crimea, its role in Syria, its use of chemical agents against civilians, or its violations of its armed control obligations, President Trump acquiesced in Russia's lies and alternative facts and undermined our security in the process.

A low point was President Trump siding with Putin, over our own intelligence community's assessment, on Russian election interference. It was the unanimous judgment of the intelligence community that Putin directed an attack on our 2016 elections with the intent of undermining public faith in our democratic process. That assessment was just reaffirmed unanimously by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Furthermore, last Friday, the Justice Department indicted 12 Russian military intelligence officers on charges of "large-scale cyber operations to interfere with the 2016 presidential election." Despite being briefed on these developments, President Trump chose to side with Putin on election interference.

It is unconscionable that an American President, standing on foreign soil, chose to play Putin's press secretary rather than take the word of his own intelligence officials—career professionals who put their lives on the line for the safety and security of all Americans.

President Trump's words hurt our national security. Nations or potential sources may no longer trust the United States. They may hold back in fear that their highly classified secrets could be revealed to Russia, a foreign adversary, as Trump has done in the past.

Yesterday, President Trump also made a moral equivalency between the United States and Russia. This is an unfathomable and dangerous break from the actions of past Presidents of both parties.

President Trump's actions this week and throughout his Presidency have undermined the once bedrock belief around the globe that the United States is a beacon of hope and reliability.

Further, moral equivalency is a long-time Russian narrative used by Putin to justify his continued oppression of his people and suppression of democratic impulses within Russia.

On a more basic level, President Trump is undermining that which makes us strong. The world order that the United States created after World War II is something we have benefited

from for decades. We draw strength from our allies and from participation in international institutions. The United States is not weakened by them; we are strengthened by them.

The mere act of the two Presidents sitting down together was a victory for Putin. Instead of taking this opportunity to talk tough and call Putin out for his misdeeds, President Trump delivered rewards without gaining any changes in Russia's behavior. This adds up to weakness, acquiescence, and more. Nothing about Russia's behavior has changed. Putin is still in Crimea. He is still propping up Assad's murderous actions in Syria. He is still interfering in the domestic politics of the West and undermining people's faith in the democratic process.

This is not theoretical. Director of National Intelligence Coats warned that Russian cyber attacks are threatening our government and our financial institutions. He used very explicit language to say that, akin to before 9/11, the warning signs of Russian aggression are "blinking red again." Yet, instead of recognizing that threat, denouncing attacks from Russia, and developing a whole-of-government solution to counter the threat, Trump is cozying up to Putin.

In light of President Trump's dereliction of his responsibilities, I urge my Republican colleagues to stand up for the security and integrity of our democracy. Some of my colleagues have condemned President Trump's performance yesterday, but clearer and more concrete steps must be taken. Republicans must reject President Trump's weak and damaging views on foreign policy. What we saw this week and throughout this Presidency is an aberration that is unsustainable, and this course must be corrected soon. Words of regret or sadness for a missed opportunity are not sufficient in the wake of yesterday's display of weakness and narcissism.

Republicans should join with Democrats to pass legislation to protect the Mueller investigation and to ensure that the investigation is permitted to follow the evidence wherever it leads and bring this matter to a conclusion.

Republicans should join with Democrats to hold hearings and get testimony about the President's trip and particularly what he promised Putin during their private meeting.

Republicans should join with Democrats in calling on the President to fully implement the sanctions act against Russia for its numerous nefarious activities.

Republicans should join with Democrats and demand that President Trump be interviewed by Special Counsel Mueller under oath.

Finally, I urge the Trump administration to at long last issue a comprehensive strategy coordinating our military, diplomatic, law enforcement, financial, and all other instruments of U.S. national power to counter Russian malign influence, as called for in last

year's NDAA. We are waiting a year for a legislative mandate of this Congress to provide such a report. Time is running out.

This is not a partisan issue. It is long past time for the President to denounce the Kremlin's behavior and take steps to mount a whole-of-government response to deter it in the future.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I yield to my colleague from Arizona if he wishes to be heard first.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you. I will just be a moment.

Mr. President, I appreciate the comments from my Democratic colleagues and hope that more of my Republican colleagues will speak about the spectacle yesterday in Helsinki.

I said yesterday that I never thought I would see the President of the United States stand with the President of Russia and blame the United States for Russian aggression. I said yesterday that that was shameful. I feel the same today.

Today, the President said that the press conference had been misinterpreted by the fake news media. I would say to the President that we all watched the press conference, and it wasn't the fake news media that sided with the Russian President over our own intelligence agencies; it was you.

This body must stand and reaffirm that we stand with the men and women in the Department of Justice who have brought these 12 indictments against individuals from the Russian Federation who interfered with our elections. We must say that we stand with our NATO allies and we stand with those in the EU; that they are not foes, they are friends. We must stand up to the real adversaries we have. Right now, Russia is an adversary. I hope the President will realize that. I hope he will take the word of the men and women of the Department of Justice and the entire intelligence agencies rather than the empty words of a dictator.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored and grateful to follow the very powerful comments of my friend and colleague from Arizona. They remind me of our mutual friend, his colleague and partner from the State of Arizona, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, whom we miss at this moment more than ever. Senator MCCAIN is with us in spirit, and those words remind us that the threat we face at this perilous time in our national history must be met with a truly bipartisan response.

The threat we face is every bit as serious as any in the history of this country because it involves an attack on the pillars of our democracy. We know that 9/11 and Pearl Harbor involved a

physical assault with immediate loss of life. Russia's attack on this country in 2016 is every bit as serious and urgent.

In the words of the Director of National Intelligence, our former colleague Dan Coats, this incident should put us truly on alert. Those blinking lights based on objective and unvarnished evidence, as he put it, of a pervasive, continuing attack should bring us together as a legislative body and as a country.

This issue really is not about Donald Trump as much as it is about our Nation. The summit in a sense realized our worst fears; indeed, our deepest nightmare. At best, it was going to be a gift to President Putin because it legitimized him and elevated him on the world stage, even if no words followed that private meeting.

The truth is that it happened, and the President of the United States was a puppet, a patsy, a pushover—in fact, an appeaser, in the worst tradition of that term—on the public stage. The President put Russia over this country. He failed to fulfill his oath of office to defend this Nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic. He failed to put America's interests first. In fact, he blamed America first. He blamed everyone except for Putin and himself.

Now he has attempted, shamefully, to rewrite history—unartfully, incredibly. He has said, in effect, that some editing, some minor change in grammar, would allow him to escape the universal condemnation from all sides of the political spectrum of his shameful surrender to Vladimir Putin.

The question is, What does Vladimir Putin have on Donald Trump? We will not know until the special counsel finishes his investigation. We must do everything in this body—and this point is central to what we are saying today—to protect the special counsel against the continuing onslaught and assault from Donald Trump's cronies and surrogates on the far right—the fringe of the Republican Party—who are seeking to discredit the special counsel investigation; indeed, talking about impeaching Ron Rosenstein and demanding documents involved in that investigation. We must now pass the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act.

If Donald Trump is serious and he believes that the Russians, in fact, interfered with our democracy, what he will do now is implement the sanctions that were made mandatory on Russia. He has violated his duty by continuing to avoid imposing them. He will authorize the Cyber Command to take aggressive measures—not simply defensive—and penetrate and disrupt the systems of cyber within Russia that are used against us. He will authorize the exposure and revelation of Russian oligarchs' and Vladimir Putin's wealth around the world, hidden and concealed—the result of their corruption in Russia. He himself can undertake these measures.

If the Senate is serious about protecting the United States, it will order

that the transcripts and notes and any documents and the security team who attended that summit come to the Congress in a closed briefing and eventually an open one, under oath, so the American people can know. They should be required to provide whatever they know about what happened in that private meeting so that we know what happened and the implications of what happened are truly known.

Just yesterday, the Department of Justice issued a criminal complaint against Maria Butina. It followed indictments against 12 Russian individuals. Maria Butina is a Russian agent who worked through the NRA to influence and corrupt our political system—again, part of the Russian attack on this country. We need to hold hearings now to know whether Russia has been using organizations like the NRA and other shell companies to illegally funnel money into our election.

I will close where I began. These issues transcend partisanship. They ought to be put above the everyday issues that concern us. We cannot say that we weren't warned. The failure to act and act now to hold Russia accountable, to make them pay a price, to show them that we will not tolerate—nor will our allies—this kind of interference in our elections will mean they will do it again. History will judge us harshly.

Our allies were never more important than now. They are victims of the same kind of attack. Rather than trashing and beating them, as President Trump has done, we should bring them to our side and express to them, as this Senate did by a 97-to-2 vote, that we are committed to NATO and that if one of us is attacked, all of us are attacked. In fact, almost all of us are under attack right now.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I wish to start by thanking my colleague from Connecticut for his words today and for his leadership in protecting the integrity of our democracy and the rule of law.

When it comes to issues of national security and foreign policy, we have had many vigorous debates in this country over the decades and many important debates here on the floor of this Senate. There have been deep disagreements over specific foreign policy choices that we make as a country. But there has consistently been broad bipartisan support for the view that the United States and strong U.S. leadership benefit not only our interests but the interests of folks around the world. That has been American leadership grounded in key values and principles, including the promotion of democracy, universal human rights, the rule of law, a free press, and the idea that America is an exceptional nation based not on tribalism but a beacon of hope for all people, as symbolized by the

Statue of Liberty. This isn't to say that over the decades we have always been virtuous or always consistent in the application of these principles. We all know we have made many mistakes and detours along the way, but until now, until this moment in our history, the principles and values I outlined have been the guideposts and cornerstones for American Presidents—Republicans and Democrats alike—since the end of World War II.

With those guideposts, we have built some very important international architecture: our alliances, international institutions, and international agreements. But today, sadly, we have a President who has gone absolutely rogue on the time-tested bipartisan tenets of American foreign policy, whether it is the way he attacks or berates our allies or when he consistently goes out of his way to praise dictators like Vladimir Putin or Kim Jong Un or other autocrats around the world.

I am not going to take the time today to chronicle the mountain of evidence leading up to the events of last week that show already President Trump's radical retreat from the kind of global leadership that America has exercised since the end of World War II. We all know that those views are shared by many of our Republican Senate colleagues. Senator MCCAIN has been very strong on that, as have other Republican Senators. Others have said quietly what Senator MCCAIN has said publicly. This is a moment where everybody has to come together as patriots, not partisans.

Including Senator MCCAIN, we have a lot of Republican foreign policy experts and independent groups, like Freedom House, that have raised the alarm bells about this administration's far-reaching attacks on fundamental institutions of democratic society, like freedom of the press.

One thing we all know is this: We know the words and actions of an American President have real-world consequences. Those of President Trump leave our friends unsure if they can depend on us and create openings and opportunities for our adversaries. They weaken our credibility and squander our moral authority on the world stage.

Of course, the events of last week and yesterday are the ultimate expression of this President's retreat from that bipartisan tradition of American foreign policy—first, going to a NATO meeting and berating some of our closest allies. All of us understand that each of our NATO allies needs to fully contribute to NATO. In fact, these countries have already made that commitment, but President Trump threw them under the bus and diminished the importance of the NATO alliance.

Then, of course, he went directly from there to his meeting with President Putin, but before that meeting, the President let us know what his state of mind was. The President tweeted out: "Our relationship with

Russia has NEVER been worse thanks to many years of U.S. foolishness . . .”—not Russia’s invasion or occupation of Crimea, not Russian aggression in the Ukraine, not Russian activities around the world that undermine peace and stability, and not Russia’s attack on our democracy in the 2016 elections.

In fact, shortly before he went to meet with Putin, he again invoked a Stalinist expression, where he said: “Much of our news media is indeed the enemy of the people.” That is something I am sure warmed the heart of Vladimir Putin, who doesn’t like any criticism, like our President doesn’t like any criticism.

Then he went in to this meeting and came out in that joint press conference. What did he do? Standing side by side with Vladimir Putin, he told the world that he sided with Putin over the leaders of the American intelligence community on the question of whether or not Russia interfered in the American elections in 2016. He said: President Putin assures me that they did not interfere. He says it very strongly.

Then, he sided with President Putin over his own director of the CIA, who has testified before Congress about Russian interference in 2016, over Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, over Secretary of State Pompeo, and over the very people President Trump said all of us should trust in these important positions of responsibility. Yet, on a world stage, he bowed to President Putin and said he trusted President Putin’s word over that of U.S. intelligence. I understand that today he is trying to walk this back. He actually tweeted:

While I had a great meeting with NATO . . . I had an even better meeting with Vladimir Putin of Russia. Sadly, it is not being reported that way—the Fake News is going Crazy!

The challenge President Trump has this time is that we all watched that press conference. The world saw it. So really, the question now for us here in the Senate—Republicans and Democrats alike—is this: What are we going to do? What are we going to do now that the President of the United States has taken this position, undermining the credibility of his own country?

We were worried before the President went to the NATO meeting, and we passed a resolution here—that was a good thing—affirming our support for NATO. Last year, over the objections of the Trump administration, we passed legislation imposing sanctions on Russia.

Now we have to come together, as Senates have before—Republicans and Democrats—to send a very strong signal that the United States stands together in support of the bipartisan principles we have stood for before.

We now know the President will not defend the integrity of our democratic process. We need to do it, and my colleagues have outlined many steps we should take. One step we should take is

directly related to future elections, because what we know from the testimony of the head of the CIA, the head of the DNI, and the Secretary of State is that they all expect Russia—unless something changes—to interfere in our 2018 and future elections.

The 2018 elections are 16 weeks away. We now know the President of the United States is not going to defend the integrity of the democratic process. So we have to do it. One of the many things we should do is to support legislation I have introduced together with Senator RUBIO, bipartisan legislation. It is very clear. It says to Vladimir Putin: If you interfere in another U.S. election and we catch you, Russia will automatically face very stiff sanctions to your energy sector and your banking sector, and there will be a huge price to pay. It is called the DETER Act. The whole idea is to make sure that Vladimir Putin knows that the cost of interfering in our elections far outweigh any benefit he may think he gets.

So I hope we will stand together as Republicans and Democrats to do what the President of the United States will not do, and that is to protect the integrity of our elections. Let’s learn from the past. Let’s work together for the future.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, just yesterday the world watched as President Trump, standing in front of the American flag, side by side with Vladimir Putin, not only betrayed the dedication of the men and women of the U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities but then showered praise upon the Russian President—the man who directed the interference of our elections.

This prompted outcry from Members on both sides of the aisle, as it should. I read statements from my colleagues that were very strong in condemning President Trump for putting Russia ahead of the United States, using terms like “shameful” and “disgraceful,” and not just from Republicans who bravely stood up to this President before. I heard from Members of Congress and even from some FOX News contributors, unable to twist themselves into defending this President at this moment, as he so clearly undercut our own country. I am glad they spoke up because words matter.

But do you know what also matters? Action. So now, I ask: What will congressional Republicans do about it? Many Republican Members of Congress are acting as if they just have a Twitter feed, as if they aren’t the party in control of the Senate and the House, as if they don’t have the ability to actually make a difference and demand change. That is absurd.

The time for handwringing and hoping the problem goes away is over. With the power to call up legislation and hold hearings, Republican leaders do have options, and they certainly

have a whole lot of Democrats who stand ready and willing to help.

It is truly horrifying and deeply alarming that President Trump failed to use that moment to push President Putin to end his attacks on our country and our elections, and he failed to condemn the Kremlin’s interference in the elections of our allies; or Putin’s support of the brutal Assad regime and connections to chemical weapons attacks by the Syrian Government; or the illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula; or the 2014 downing of MH17 over Ukraine, where 295 people were killed; or the murder of journalists and opposition politicians; or the use of chemical weapons; or the undemocratic authoritarian and oppressive rule of the Putin regime and how it actively works against our American principles.

Instead of standing up for our values and our national security, our President defended Putin on all fronts. Instead of putting America first, he performed Putin’s bidding by attacking our closest allies and trying to dismantle NATO.

Today, I know President Trump tried desperately to backtrack, but we know where he stands, and we all heard what he said on the world stage just yesterday. It is appalling, inexcusable, and unworthy of the President.

So my message to every Member of the Senate and to every Member of the other body is clear. It is time to strengthen the sanctions against Russia for its aggression around the world and to demand answers from Secretary Pompeo and the other members of the Trump national security team, especially about what the President may have promised Putin during their closed-door meeting, and for them to provide Congress—all of us—with any notes from the meeting that may exist.

We need them to stand up for and protect the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the special counsel; to insist that the President demand the extradition of the 12 Russians indicted for their attacks on our elections; and to pass election security legislation.

This is not a partisan issue. This is about defending the integrity and foundational values of our Nation. This is about Congress doing its constitutional job and holding the President accountable for his shocking and repeated failures. This is about telling our allies around the world that they can still depend on the United States. This is about putting the country before the party.

Stand not just with Democrats. Stand with people across the country by taking action to hold Russia accountable and to protect this country from future attacks. Ask President Trump why he is choosing to defend Russia and blame America, and ask what or who is motivating him, because it certainly is not the American people, our security, our values, or our future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to see President Trump's clarification today. The Russians did meddle in our election. That is the consensus not just of the intelligence community, but it is the consensus here among our own Intelligence Committees of the House and Senate, led by Republicans.

I will say that Congress has pushed pretty hard against some of the Russian activity, not just the meddling but the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's continued support of the Assad regime in Syria, which has caused so much pain and agony. We have passed historic sanctions around here on Russia. Should we have additional sanctions? I am certainly open to that, but it is not as if Congress has not acted.

We have also provided, for the first time ever, lethal weapons to the Ukrainians to be able to push back on the eastern border of Ukraine. I pleaded with the Obama administration to provide such weapons, and they never did, and this administration has done so despite protestations from Russia.

We just funded \$350 million or so to protect our electoral security here in this country and to help our State boards of election to be able to push back against what I am concerned about, which would be interference in yet another election cycle in this country. I am glad that was a bipartisan effort to do so. We have also built up our military, including putting more resources into Central and Eastern Europe and more exercises there to push back, including up-arming our armored vehicles there because of the threat we now believe is coming from Russia, not just on the eastern border of Ukraine but throughout eastern Central Europe.

This administration has actually expelled more Russian diplomats, I think, than any administration at once, at least. In reaction to the poisoning in the UK, we expelled more diplomats than any other country. We also shut down a Russian consulate, I believe, in the State of the colleague who just spoke, and these are all things that have happened.

The irony is, the actions speak pretty loudly, don't they? It is unfortunate that our words have not spoken as loudly recently.

Again, I appreciate the President's clarification today. I think we need to be honest. We need to be straightforward, and that would result in a better relationship with Russia.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Today, Mr. President, I am coming to the floor to speak about something very positive; that is, the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to be the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. A lot of people have talked about Judge Kavanaugh's impeccable qualifications.

I spoke to a Democratic colleague today who may or may not support

him, but said: I agree this guy is very qualified. And he is. He now sits on the DC Circuit, the second most powerful court in the land. He has lots of decisions, and they are decisions that have gotten positive reviews from judges across the political spectrum. He is clearly qualified.

Important to me are not just someone's qualifications and their legal background, but also their character. Character is incredibly important for a Supreme Court that will have to deal with so many issues—issues that are important to us and our families going forward.

This guy is someone of deep and strong character. He is compassionate. He has the humility to be able to listen. He has a big heart. I have known this guy for over 15 years. Brett Kavanaugh served in the second Bush administration. I also served there. I got to know him and his wife there and before that, as well, during the campaigns.

This is someone who is, to me, not just a legal scholar and a judge but a friend. I have seen him as a father and as a husband. I cannot think of anyone I would rather see on the Court in terms of these character strengths he has. He is someone who is humble and compassionate and a good listener.

As he goes through the confirmation here in the Senate, I think my colleagues who are still undecided are going to be impressed. I think the American people will be impressed because they will recognize him as the kind of person they would like to see on the Supreme Court.

Judge Kavanaugh, or Professor Kavanaugh as he is known at the Harvard Law School where he teaches, is respected for all of the right reasons, across the board. He volunteers as a tutor for underprivileged kids. He helps the homeless through his church. He fed meals to the homeless just last week, which was previously planned.

Some friends on both sides of the aisle have come forward to speak out about him and his character, and that is good. His former students at Harvard Law School have said that he is a guy who never pushed partisan politics on them in class. Instead, he focused on the Constitution and the importance of hearing all sides of an argument to find out what the law is and what the law says. That is what you want in a Supreme Court Justice.

Today, I want to mention some people who know Brett Kavanaugh by another name; that is, Coach K. Coach K is not the famous Coach K of Duke fame, but he is Coach Kavanaugh. He teaches and coaches both his younger daughter's team and his older daughter's team.

Julie O'Brien, whose daughter goes to school with Brett Kavanaugh's older daughter, recently wrote an article in the Washington Post that I thought encapsulated what I am trying to say about Brett Kavanaugh. She discussed how Coach K coaches her daughter's

basketball team. Last season, the Blessed Sacrament School's sixth grade girls team had an undefeated season and won a citywide championship, so he must be a pretty good coach too.

Not surprisingly to the parents or players who know him, Julie wrote, the team photograph and trophy are displayed prominently in Coach K's judicial chambers. Along with coaching, Brett is known as the carpool dad, shuttling his daughters and their friends to and from practices, games, and events.

Mrs. O'Brien went on to mention another story, which I think displays Brett's character well. She said that a few years ago her husband passed away. With no one to accompany her daughter to the annual father-daughter dance, Brett Kavanaugh stepped up. That year, and every year since then, Brett has taken her daughter alongside his own daughter to the father-daughter dance.

That is the kind of man Brett Kavanaugh is. He is thoughtful. He is caring. He does things because they are the right things to do, as someone who cares about others and cares about his community.

He has chosen to spend 25 of his last 28 years serving the American people in various jobs, most recently, of course, on the DC Circuit. He is the kind of person, again, you would want on the Supreme Court. He has a judicial philosophy that is pretty simple. He has proved time and again that he is a judge who will apply the law fairly and impartially.

He interprets the law in the Constitution based on the words, historical context, and meaning rather than trying to legislate from the bench. That is what most people are looking for.

Speaking to the Notre Dame Law School in 2017, Judge Kavanaugh spoke of the legacy of Justice Antonin Scalia and what people should take away from his time as a Supreme Court Justice. He stated:

The judge's job is to interpret the law, not to make the law or make policy. So read the words of the statute as written. Read the text of the Constitution as written, mindful of history and tradition. Don't make up new constitutional rights that are not in the text of the Constitution. Don't shy away from enforcing constitutional rights that are in the text of the Constitution.

I think Judge Kavanaugh is the kind of judge the American people want—someone who will fairly and impartially apply the law, not legislate from the bench. He has an outstanding judicial record from 12 years on the bench. He is a thought leader among his peers, on the appellate courts, and has the respect of the Justices on the Supreme Court, as well, because they picked up his decisions and used them in later cases.

Just as importantly to me, again, he is a good person. I am proud to support Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States. As his confirmation process continues, I hope my colleagues on both sides will