

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

keep an open mind and get to know the Brett Kavanaugh whom I know, his family and friends know, and the American people are coming to know. I hope we can confirm him with a strong bipartisan vote so that he can serve our American community from a new role—that of Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

TRUMP-PUTIN SUMMIT

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, as my colleagues and the Presiding Officer may know, I spent many years of my life in the Navy. I spent some 23 years, starting at the age of 21, on Active and Reserve Duty in the U.S. Navy as a naval flight officer, and I spent most of those 23 years as a P-3 aircraft mission commander. I was even, for a limited period of time, the air intelligence officer for my P-3 squadron when we were deployed in Southeast Asia.

I flew hundreds of missions during both the Vietnam war and the Cold War, conducting surveillance operations, gathering intelligence on the Soviets and on others who undermine and destroy the American way of life.

As a Cold War warrior, watching an American President yesterday blatantly ignore attacks on a democracy and our intelligence agencies was beyond galling. It was reprehensible—reprehensible.

Four days ago, Special Counsel Mueller indicted 12 Russian intelligence officers for interfering in our democratic elections in 2016. That same day, last Friday—Friday the 13th—the Director of National Intelligence, our old colleague, Dan Coats from Indiana, said that our country's digital infrastructure is literally under attack. Here is what he said:

The warning signs are there. The system is blinking. It is why I believe we are at a critical point.

That was on Friday the 13th.

Yesterday, our President, with the entire world watching, chose to attack not the Soviets, not the Russians, but Bob Mueller. He is one of the finest people I have ever known and worked with. He attacked Bob Mueller and rebuked the U.S. intelligence community—with whom I have worked as a member of the Homeland Security committee for any number of years, as has our Presiding Officer—instead of siding with the 17 U.S. intelligence agencies, all of whom agreed unanimously, without dissent, that the Soviets, the Russians, intervened in our election in 2016 in an effort to throw the election to Donald Trump and to take it away from Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee. There is no question that is what they did.

Our President chose to ignore that, and instead of admiring and speaking to the work of the intelligence agencies and concurring with them yesterday, he decided to side with an authoritarian thug, Vladimir Putin. That was a defining moment in our Nation's history.

I think it is a sad moment in our Nation's history. We ought to move immediately to pass bipartisan legislation, introduced in the Senate earlier this year, to allow Bob Mueller's critical work and that of the people working with him to be completed without the constant threat of political interference.

NOMINATION OF BRETT KAVANAUGH

Mr. President, having said that as a predicate, I want to turn to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to serve on the Supreme Court. Brett Kavanaugh used to clerk for a Federal judge named Walter Stapleton. Most people who are outside of the Delaware Valley—and maybe Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey—haven't heard of Walter Stapleton. But if you have been involved in legal issues or judicial issues there, you may recall that he was nominated to serve as a district court judge, a Federal district judge, in Delaware and served there for a number of years with distinction.

He went on to serve on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in our region—again, serving with distinction. I think he assumed senior status in that court in 1999, after many years of service on the Federal bench.

In the second half of the last century, he was seen as a giant in the judicial system—the Federal judicial system—certainly in our part of the world, but I think beyond our borders.

When George W. Bush, my former colleague as Governor, as President, nominated Brett Kavanaugh to serve on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, among the people I consulted with was former Judge Walter Stapleton and others who had clerked for him and worked with him. They knew Brett Kavanaugh and were very complimentary, as our colleague ROB PORTMAN has been today, talking about the human side of him and the qualities I think we would admire in almost anybody.

When I was a kid growing up, there used to be a guy on the radio—ABC radio—many years ago. His name was Paul Harvey. I don't know if our Presiding Officer is old enough to remember Paul Harvey. He would give the news, and he would do things like give the top of the news, and he would say “Page 2”—and sort of like turn the page and report the rest of the news.

I am going to go to page 2 here today with respect to Brett Kavanaugh. I voted for him. There are about a dozen Democrats in 2006 who voted for cloture; four of us—Robert Byrd, Mary Landrieu, I think, Ben Nelson, and I—voted for confirmation. We voted our hopes rather than our views. We voted, in part, because of what we had learned from others who knew him, who had worked with him, and who admired him. I have said flatout that if I had known then what I know now about the kinds of decisions he would write and support over the following 12 years, I would not have voted for him in 2006. I think it is highly unlikely I would vote for him today.

I think it is time to hit the pause button on such consequential nominees, like Mr. Kavanaugh, whose writings have repeatedly made clear that he believes the President is above the law. This is a man, Mr. Kavanaugh, who worked with Kenneth Starr to go after Bill Clinton as President, hammer and tong, for alleged misdeeds and misconduct that he apparently had done.

Now, some 20 years later, that same Brett Kavanaugh seems to have—rather than feeling that Presidents definitely are not above the law, that Presidents have to be held accountable like anybody else, he seems to have done a 180. Instead, he basically seems to feel that Presidents are almost above the law and cannot be held accountable.

I don't get it; I don't know how someone can change on something—it wasn't just during the Starr years. To have gone from that position of being such a fervent attack dog in going after Bill Clinton to basically saying that the Presidents can pretty much do, without oversight, what they see fit—that is one of the issues I want to discuss with Judge Kavanaugh, when I meet with him, hopefully later this month.

For that reason alone—Judge Kavanaugh's views of the President, with the President being above the law, especially at this point in time in our Nation's history—I think that one issue, that one reason, should be enough to say let's hit the pause button. Let's hit the pause button on this nomination. There are a number of other reasons why Judge Kavanaugh is, in my view, the wrong pick for the Nation's highest Court. I want to stress just a few of those today.

In May 2006, as a nominee to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, Brett Kavanaugh made a pledge under oath. Brett Kavanaugh pledged to Members of this body that if confirmed, he would “interpret the law as written and not impose personal policy preferences.” Those are his words, not my words. Mr. Kavanaugh went on to pledge that he would “exercise judicial power prudently and with restraint.” Brett Kavanaugh pledged that he would “follow precedent in all cases fully and fairly.” Those are not my words; they are his words. Brett Kavanaugh pledged that he would, above all, “maintain the absolute independence of the judiciary,” which is, in his words, “the crown jewel of our constitutional democracy.”

I took Brett Kavanaugh at his word in 2006. I trusted him when he made those pledges. I afforded Mr. Kavanaugh, as a young lawyer, the opportunity to fulfill his promise to faithfully uphold and interpret our laws as written. I expected him not to inject his personal policy preferences or the ideology of special interests and groups like the Heritage Foundation into his decision making on the bench.

I know now, a little more than 12 years after he made those pledges, that