

the first women to attend the University of Virginia. Together, both enrolled in the Medical College of Virginia, where his father became a doctor and his mother became a dentist.

Andy's parents had enormous student debts to pay, and so Andy learned what it was like to grow up with little as well, but he likewise learned the value of an education from his parents.

Andy went to the University of Virginia on a full academic scholarship, graduating with a perfect 4.0 GPA and at the top of his class. He then became a Truman Scholar and went on to attend Harvard Law School.

Andy graduated from Harvard Law magna cum laude and clerked for Judge David Sentelle on the DC Circuit, one of the most respected Federal appellate judges in the country, and then clerked for Justice Samuel Alito on the Supreme Court of the United States.

He then worked as an attorney advisor for 2 years in the Office of Legal Counsel in the U.S. Department of Justice under the George W. Bush administration.

Andy then went into private practice at Kellogg Hansen here in Washington, DC. From there, Andy went to the Texas solicitor general's office to serve as the deputy solicitor general of Texas. I can state that office is usually a pretty tight ship.

After that, he joined Governor Abbott to serve as his legal counsel. He is now the general counsel for the Governor and has spent all but 3 years of his career in public service.

If I may say, it shows a depth of character and a devotion to his country that Andy would stay in public service for so long, so dutifully, while forgoing the great rewards that come with private practice. He is devoted to the practice of law, and over the years, Andy has displayed a keen understanding of the Constitution and how it applies and guides us to this very day.

I am confident Andy will not substitute his own policy preferences, his own opinions for the rule of law, but he will instead serve the people of Texas and the American people by respecting the law as written—as written in the Constitution and as written in Federal law—passed by this Congress and signed by the President. Our courts and our country are well-served by judges with this dedication, wisdom, and forbearance.

In his career, Andy has argued across the country in State and Federal courts. He has appeared and argued numerous times before the Fifth Circuit, and he has argued twice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

He has earned widespread praise from both Democrats and Republicans, and he was recommended to the Judiciary Committee by esteemed legal voices from both the left and right. Andy is respected across the political spectrum. I know my colleagues in the Senate will return the same respect when they vote today to confirm Andy

Oldham as a circuit judge of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Andy will be the fifth judge we have confirmed for the Fifth Circuit, one of the finest courts in the country—a court I have been privileged to argue before many times. Andy will be the third Texan and fifth circuit judge in the last year and a half, and that, I think, is one of the greatest legacies of President Trump and this Republican Senate; namely, the confirmation of principled constitutionalists to the Federal court; judges who will be faithful to the Constitution and Bill of Rights, who will stand steadfastly to protect our fundamental liberties, to protect free speech and religious liberty, to protect the Second Amendment, the right to keep and bear arms, to protect the Tenth Amendment, the fundamental liberties of the people against ever-expanding Federal power.

This is a legacy that was front and center as to why the American people elected this majority, and it is a legacy that will benefit Texans and Americans for generations to come.

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. LEAHY. 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. LEAHY. Madam President, as we all know, in this country, in 2016, the Russian Government weighed a covert, multifaceted criminal campaign to interfere in our elections. We now know it was intended to help then-Candidate Donald Trump win the Presidency. We don't know the full impact of Russia's interference, but it is beyond debate that it happened.

Russia, as we now found out, used inflammatory propaganda—it actually was fake news—attempts to suppress Democratic turnout and boost support for Donald Trump. They also stole communications belonging to the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton campaign, which were then strategically released to maximize their impact. They were released at times when they could counter negative news stories about Donald Trump.

Just last week, 12 Russian intelligence officers were charged with hacking campaign officials' emails and State election boards. In just over a year—in what may rank as the most productive special counsel investigation in our Nation's history—32 people and 3 companies have been charged or pled guilty as part of the Russian investigation. We likely will not know the full extent of Russia's interference until the special counsel's investigation is complete.

But what is clear—and this is what should concern Republicans and Demo-

crats alike—is that our democracy, our great country, was attacked by a foreign adversary. And two days ago, on an international stage, standing shoulder to shoulder with Vladimir Putin, our President sided with that attacker.

Instead of forcefully condemning Russia's attack on our democracy, its role in annexing Crimea, poisoning individuals with chemical weapons on the soil of one of our closest allies, Russia's downing of a passenger airline with nearly 300 innocent civilians on-board, or undermining democracies around the world, our President offered only praise for the authoritarian President Putin. He then repeated his conspiracy theories about the FBI and called the Russia investigation a “witch-hunt”—denigrating our law enforcement institutions, while standing beside the foe they work so hard to protect all Americans from—Republicans and Democrats alike.

In my 44 years as a Senator, I have never seen anything like it. I can think of no Republican President and no Democratic President who would ever do this. I never thought it would be possible in our country before President Trump took office.

Yesterday, the President attempted to walk back his decision to side with Russia over our own intelligence agencies. He attempted to do it because of the criticism he got from both Republicans and Democrats, but as many of my colleagues told me would happen, President Trump walked back his walk back. He reiterated that the interference “could have been other people. There are a lot of people out there.”

This morning on Twitter—where apparently he does his deepest thinking—he claimed that people at the higher ends of intelligence loved his press conference in Helsinki. I do not think anyone here doubts that the President meant what he said and said what he meant in Helsinki. And, after their two-hour private meeting in Helsinki, I do not think President Putin has any doubt either.

We have to know that Russia shares neither our values nor our interests. Russia is not our friend. Of course, we want to see improved relations with Russia on Syria, on nuclear proliferation, and on many critical issues, but for that to happen, Russia needs to respect our democracy and values. We must not slouch down to theirs.

The United States is the leader of the free world. The free world is under threat, as it has so often been. But these threats are not supposed to come from within.

Just moments ago, when asked if Russia is still targeting the United States, the President inexplicably said “no.”

That is not the truth.

Russia is still targeting the United States. This is despite his Director of National Intelligence, Dan Coats, confirming just last week that Russia is, indeed, still targeting our digital infrastructure and interfering in our democracy. Director Coats compared it to the

warning signs that emerged prior to the 9/11 attacks, but the President denies it is happening.

I know Director Coats. I served with him when he was a Republican Senator in this body. I know he would not say this if it were not so. Notwithstanding the President's saying that Russia is not targeting us, his own Director of National Intelligence says they are. We can't trust this President's judgment when it comes to Russia.

Remember, the President takes an oath to protect and defend our Nation. When it comes to Russia, it appears he does not intend to abide by his oath to defend and protect our Nation. This Congress is going to be derelict in its duty if it takes no action.

All of us have to speak with a single voice in this moment—Republicans and Democrats alike. We should all condemn the President's actions, which were as dangerous as they were shameful.

These condemnations are important, but words are not enough. Remember, Congress is a coequal branch of government. Remember that the Senate is supposed to be the conscience of the Nation. Let's act like it.

The President, obviously, can't be trusted to keep his hands off of the Russia investigation. By denigrating it at every opportunity and by dismissing its lead investigator last year, he has repeatedly failed the test.

The Senate Judiciary Committee recently passed legislation with a strong bipartisan vote. Republicans and Democrats alike voted to protect the special counsel's investigation. That legislation is before the Senate. Let's enact it into law. Let's take what Republicans and Democrats together said in the Judiciary Committee—that we will protect the special counsel's investigation. Let's vote up or down. Let's do it and enact it into law.

It is often said that the only thing President Putin responds to is strength. Let's show him that here in the Congress, we stand united in opposition to his ongoing attempts to attack our democracy. Believe me, they are ongoing right at this moment. Let's pass stronger sanctions targeting him and the oligarchs who enable him, who continue to help him because they become billionaires by doing it. Let's pass a resolution making it clear that if President Trump chooses to stand with President Putin, then he stands alone. The European Union is not our foe. And President Putin is not our friend. Our allies around the world, especially those that have stood with us since World War II, are looking at us at this moment. They are questioning whether the United States will be a reliable partner in the face of creeping authoritarianism, both at home and abroad. Let's show them where we stand.

This is not about politics. It is not about Republicans or Democrats. This is about who we are as a country and what we stand for as Americans—

whether we stand for democracy; whether we stand for freedom, including the freedom of the press; whether we stand for the rule of law; whether we stand for truth; and whether we stand for America. As a Vermonter and a Senator, I know where I stand. It is time we stand together.

#### BLUE-SLIP TRADITION

Madam President, I believe I have colleagues on the floor who are going to make a unanimous consent request, but before they do, I feel obliged to speak up about the steady erosion of the norms and traditions that protect the Senate's unique constitutional role with respect to lifetime appointments to our Federal courts.

We should all be alarmed by the Judiciary Committee's abrupt change in course when it comes to respect for blue slips, which allow home-State Senators to have a word in what happens. This should concern us all. For much of this body's history, blue slips have given meaning to the constitutional requirement of "advice and consent." They have protected the prerogatives of home-State Senators, and they have ensured fairness and comity in the Senate.

When I was chairman of the Judiciary Committee, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, not a single judicial nominee received a hearing without first receiving both home-State Senators' positive blue slips. Regardless of who was in the Oval Office, I steadfastly defended blue slips because I firmly believed in both their constitutional and institutional importance. I also firmly believed in the prerogatives of home-State Senators and the need to ensure that the White House works in good faith with those Senators.

My decision to defend blue slips was not without some controversy. I faced significant pressure from my own party's leadership to hold hearings for President Obama's nominees who had not received positive blue slips from Republican Senators. I was criticized by liberal advocacy groups and major news outlets like the New York Times, but I resisted such pressure because I believed then—and I still believe now—that certain principles matter more than party.

All of us, whether Democrat or Republican, should care about good-faith consultation when it comes to nominees from our own States. The reasons for this are both principled and pragmatic. We know our States. We know who is qualified to fill lifetime judicial seats that will have a tremendous impact on our neighbors and communities.

This week, the Senate will vote whether to confirm a nominee to the Ninth Circuit, Ryan Bounds, opposed by not one but both of his home-State Senators. Senators WYDEN and MERKLEY were cut out of the nomination process entirely. The White House interviewed Bounds and fast-tracked his nomination without consulting ei-

ther senator. If Mr. Bounds is confirmed, it will mark the first time in the history of the Senate that a judicial nominee is confirmed despite opposition from both home-State Senators.

My concern is not about a mere piece of paper. My concern is that we are failing to protect the fundamental rights of home-State Senators, and we are failing in our constitutional duty to provide our advice and consent on a President's nominees. That should concern all of us. The Senate should never function as a mere rubberstamp for nominees seeking lifetime appointments to our Federal judiciary.

Without blue slips, nothing prevents a California nominee from being appointed to a Texas court. Nothing prevents our State selection committees from being completely ignored by the White House. That is what we are seeing today. The Oregon bipartisan judicial selection commission overwhelmingly voted that Mr. Bounds—who misled the commission about his controversial writings—did not deserve its recommendation.

Some may dismiss these warnings, but I have served in the Senate long enough to know that winds tend to change direction. Inevitably, the majority becomes the minority. The White House changes hands. I suspect Republicans will rekindle their love of blue slips if they find themselves in the minority under a Democratic President, as they did under President Obama and during my chairmanship. That is precisely why maintaining a single, consistent policy with respect to blue slips is so critical.

That is why I will vote against Mr. Bounds. If we abandon our longstanding traditions to change partisan expediency, that provides only fleeting advantage and inflicts lasting harm in this body. We are better off when we follow the tradition we always have. We foolishly hurt ourselves and our individual States when we allow ourselves to step away from it. I would urge all Senators to ensure that home-State Senators are provided the same courtesies during the Trump administration that they received from both Republican and Democratic Judiciary chairmen during the Obama administration. I ask my fellow Senators to oppose Mr. Bound's nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I am about to engage in a brief colloquy about a unanimous consent request with my colleague, the Senator from California.

I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding the previous order, I be able to have 5 minutes to do that prior to the vote.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 118

Mr. LEE. Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No.