

that they are willing to risk public safety to achieve it. These irresponsible politicians should know better. They aren't worthy to lead the brave, hard-working men and women of ICE. These officers are just trying to do their jobs and to keep us safe. On behalf of a grateful nation, I conclude by again extending them my deepest thanks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join the Senator from Arkansas in commending those who are involved in law enforcement, risking their lives for the safety of this Nation at all levels—Federal, State, and local. They put their badges on every single day and risk their lives for us, and that is a fact.

Within the Department of Homeland Security, there are men and women who are conscientiously trying to keep America safe. I commend them as well. I believe they are doing their job as they understand it, and they are risking their lives many times to achieve it, not only to stop the illegal flow of drugs into our country but to deter crime and to ferret out criminals where possible. They risk their lives to achieve that goal.

I have not joined in a call for the abolition of ICE, but I will not join in a call for the adoration of ICE because of one specific issue. The zero tolerance policy of the Trump administration resulted in our agents of the Department of Homeland Security forcibly separating children from their parents—forcibly separating up to 3,000 children from their parents.

I saw some of those kids separated by that agency. They were toddlers and infants. Some were being held by the care workers whom I happened to visit in Chicago. They were little babies taken from their mothers—toddlers, children 5 and 6 years old, separated by this agency under the President's zero tolerance policy. There were up to 3,000 of them, according to the administration's own estimates.

Had that happened before? Only rarely, but it became the policy of this administration until there was such an uproar in the United States and around the world that President Trump reversed his position on zero tolerance.

Reversing the position did not return the children to their parents. It took Federal courts to do that—one in particular, in San Diego, where the judge called the representatives of ICE, Health and Human Services, and all the other agencies involved in these children being removed forcibly from their parents and gave them deadlines to return the children to their parents. It was then that we discovered something about this agency. It was then that we discovered that they didn't keep a record of the parents and kids.

If you place an order online to Amazon or some other source and the next day you want to check on the status of your order, you use your tracking

number, and they will tell you where your package is. There was no tracking number when it came to these kids. If you decide that you are going to order a pizza and it seems to take a little too long and you call the pizza parlor, they can generally tell you where the delivery person is. The same thing is true in so many other areas.

Why, then, did this agency, which my colleagues are now coming to the floor claiming such great praise for, ignore the obvious? This agency, the Department of Homeland Security, ended up setting free 3,000 children into care facilities around the United States of America and didn't keep records of the parents.

We asked them several weeks ago, downstairs—all of the agencies, including ICE, referred to by the Senator from Arkansas: OK, let's get down to basics. How many kids are we talking about?

They wouldn't give us a number.

How many kids are under the age of 5? Those are the ones whom you have a deadline to reunite under the Federal court order in San Diego.

They couldn't give us a number.

Then, how many parents can you identify who actually had their kids taken away?

ICE said: We can identify 10.

Ten parents, 3,000 kids—I am not making this up. This is exactly what they said.

They said: We have 10 parents in custody. Those are the ones we can identify.

Two weeks passed, and we had another briefing this week. The numbers are now more complete. There are some 2,500 kids separated from their parents, spread around the United States.

What happened to the parents who lost their children?

The explanation from ICE was that they abandoned their kids and left.

Does that sound reasonable? Does that sound honest? You take the child away from the arms of a parent and then the parent says: I am leaving the country.

That might have happened in some cases, for reasons I don't know, but it is an outrageous suggestion. What it reflects is incompetency. How in the world can you take a child away from a parent, forcibly take them away, and not keep an adequate record for their reunification? How can you do that? Common sense and common decency suggests that you would do it.

I am not going to join in any resolution applauding that action by any Federal agency—the Department of Homeland Security, ICE, or other agencies. To me, it is a stain on the reputation of this Nation, one that we need to quickly resolve by reuniting these children with their families as quickly as possible.

You see, it isn't just a question of a holiday for these kids. Pediatricians have come forward from the American Academy of Pediatrics and have said

that what we have done is institutional abuse of children.

This separation is not just another day in the life of this 2-year-old, 5-year-old, or 8-year-old. This separation is something that is causing trauma within their own minds.

Have you read the stories about the reunifications, where some of the parents come back, finally get their children, and the children will not even come to the parents? They don't quite understand what just happened to them. They think the parent might have just decided to give them up.

There they were alone and by themselves at that tender age. Can you imagine that for your children or your grandchildren? I can't.

We did it as part of the official government policy of the Trump administration under zero tolerance.

When some of us come to the floor to question the actions, the conduct, the management of ICE, we have good reason to do it. I hope for the people within that agency who are doing their jobs conscientiously that we can at least be honest in saying that this policy is one which doesn't deserve praise and doesn't deserve our adoration on the floor of the Senate or the House.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

S. RES. 582

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a matter of extraordinary importance to the future of American democracy and, in fact, democracies all over the world. At the Helsinki summit on Monday, President Trump embarrassed our country, undermined American values, and openly sided with Russia's authoritarian leader, Vladimir Putin, against the U.S. intelligence community's unanimous assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 Presidential election.

Senator JOHN MCCAIN is right when he said: It was—

[It was] one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. But it is clear that the summit in Helsinki was a tragic mistake.

That is not BERNIE SANDERS talking. That is former Republican Presidential candidate Senator JOHN MCCAIN.

On Tuesday, after a strong international backlash, Trump, in a bizarre statement, claimed he misspoke and, of course, blamed the media for reporting what he said, even then he could not help but suggest that the electoral interference "could be other people also" and not just Russia.

In an interview last night, Trump changed his answer yet again and acknowledged, in the meekest way possible, that, yes, Russia meddled in our election, and, as the leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin is responsible.

This is a step forward, but it is not remotely sufficient. Who knows what tweet the President will release tomorrow? He seems to come up with a new response every few hours.

Today, we face an unprecedented situation of a President who, for whatever reason, refuses to acknowledge the full scope of the threat to American democracy. Either he really doesn't understand what is happening—and that is possible—or he is under Russian influence because of compromising information that they may have on him or because he is ultimately more sympathetic to Russia's authoritarian oligarchic form of government than he is to American democracy.

Whatever the reason, Congress must act now. Democrats must act and Republicans must act if we are serious about preserving American democracy. We must demand—and I know this is a radical idea—that the President of the United States represent the interests of the American people and not Russia.

Let us be as clear as we can be. Russia has been interfering not only in U.S. elections but in the elections of other democracies—the United Kingdom, France, Germany.

I yield to the Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend, the Senator from Vermont, for this outstanding resolution. It is a resolution. I don't see who can object to it. We ask for five things in this resolution: that our government accept the assessment of our own Intelligence Committees about Russia's interference; that we move aggressively to protect our election systems; that the sanctions that this body passed 98 to 2 finally be implemented by the Trump administration; that there be no interference in Mr. Mueller's investigation; and that there must be cooperation.

Who in America would object to that? Maybe a small group of hard-right ideologues, but no one else.

Who in this body will object to it? This is an outstanding resolution.

I know my friend from Vermont would agree with me. We need action in addition to resolutions, but this is an excellent start. I urge all of my colleagues to support this fullheartedly. Our country is at risk.

The Senator from Vermont is sounding a clarion call and saying in a bipartisan way that we should strengthen our country, not weaken it, as the President has done over the last week. I hope this will get unanimous support from every Member of this body—whether they be Democrat, Independent, or Republican; whether they be liberal, moderate, or conservative. If you love America, if you care about our security, support this resolution.

I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank the Democratic leader for his strong efforts on this enormously important issue. I want to reiterate that this really is not a Democratic resolution. If there is any resolution that should be bipartisan, this is it. My Republican colleagues believe in democracy. I know that. We believe in democracy. Together, we and the American people must make it clear that we will not allow Russia or

any other country on Earth to undermine our democracy.

Let's be very clear that Russia has not just been interfering in U.S. elections but in elections of other democracies around the world—the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, to name just a few countries.

Russia's goal is to advance its own interests by weakening the transatlantic alliance of democracies that arose after World War II, while also inflaming internal divisions in our country and in other countries. We should also be clear that this interference is directed from the very highest levels of the Russian Government. Last week, Special Counsel Mueller announced a set of indictments of 12 members of Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU. There can be no doubt that given the nature of the Russian Government, Vladimir Putin was directly involved in this effort.

But our concern is not only what has already happened; more importantly, it is what could happen in the future. What happened in 2016 was an outrage, but we have to make sure it does not happen in 2018 and future elections.

Last week, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, a former Republican U.S. Senator, raised the alarm on growing cyber attacks and threats against the United States in a range of areas—a range of areas, not just elections—including Federal, State, and local government agencies, the military, business, and academia, saying that the situation is at a “critical point.” Coats said Russia is “the most aggressive foreign actor, no question, and they continue their efforts to undermine our democracy.” Coats compared the warning signs to those the United States faced ahead of the September 11 terrorist attacks. This is a clear and present threat to our democratic system and those of our allies.

Ultimately, of course we want a peaceful relationship with Russia. We do not want a return to the Cold War, and we surely do not seek any type of military conflict. But at the same time, we must be very clear that we oppose what Putin is doing, both in terms of his foreign policy and his domestic policy.

On foreign policy, we will not accept Russia interfering in the elections of democratic countries, stoking political tensions by promoting hatred and suspicion of immigrants and minorities, and trying to undermine longstanding alliances between democratic allies.

In 2014, in violation of international law, Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine and annexed the Crimea region.

Russia has assassinated political opponents abroad, most recently through the use of poison in Salisbury, England. The British Government concluded in that attack that it was most likely carried out by Russia's military intelligence service.

Domestically, Putin has undermined democracy in Russia, crushing free

speech, jailing political opponents, harassing and assassinating journalists who criticize him, and increasing persecution of ethnic and religious minorities.

On Monday in Helsinki, President Trump had an opportunity to speak out on all of these things and more, to confront Putin about these destabilizing and inhumane policies. He chose not to.

Well, here is the main point: If for whatever reason the President of the United States is not going to do what is right, Congress must do it. Democrats must do it. Republicans must do it.

The Congress must make it clear—and this is the resolution I am introducing and asking for unanimous consent—the Congress must make it clear that we accept the assessment of our intelligence community with regard to Russian election interfering in our country and in other democracies. Does anybody doubt the truth of that?

The Congress must move aggressively to protect our election system from interference by Russia or any foreign power. Does anybody deny the importance of that?

The Congress must demand that the sanctions against Russia, as the Democratic leader mentioned, which passed with 98 votes, be fully implemented—98 votes on that issue.

The Congress must make it clear that we will not accept any interference with the ongoing investigation of Special Counsel Mueller, such as the offer of preemptive pardons or the firing of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, and that the President must cooperate with this investigation. Time and again, I have heard Republicans, including leaders, make it clear that there should not be an interference in that investigation. There is nothing new here on that point.

Finally—nothing new here, either—the Congress must make it clear to President Trump that his job is to protect the values that millions of Americans struggled, fought, and died to defend: justice, democracy, and equality; that he is the President of the United States and his job is to protect the interests of the American people, not Russia.

Tweets, comments, and press conferences—and I know many of my Republican colleagues have been involved in those activities. They are fine. They are constructive. But we need more from Republican Senators now. It is time for the Senate to rein in the President's dangerous behavior.

If their leadership—Senator McConnell—will not allow votes on this extraordinarily important matter, then my Republican colleagues must join with Democrats to make it happen, or all of their fine-sounding words of concern will become meaningless.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 582

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, as in legislative session, the