

habitat for bald eagles, white-tailed deer, and striped bass. The future of our coastal economy depends on recreational access, fishing, and tourism, which are now potentially at risk because of this ill-advised decision to open the coastline off of Delaware and the rest of the mid-Atlantic to potential oil and gas exploration and production.

My colleagues know that I make an effort to promote pragmatic and bipartisan ideas. It is one of my top priorities, day in and day out, to work across the aisle and do what is right for our constituents and for the United States.

Let me be clear. My view is not based on an anti-oil or anti-natural gas message. I support an “all of the above” energy strategy and have advanced legislation that will embrace an “all of the above” energy strategy, and I acknowledge there are many places in the United States where we can, and do, safely produce these resources, both onshore and offshore. But what if we happen to face a spill of the scale and size of Deepwater Horizon?

This is an overlay of the footprint of the 2010 oil disaster of the Deepwater Horizon and how it spread to impact the gulf coastline. It is perhaps a little hard to see here, but the State of Delaware and New Jersey and its fragile coastline are underneath that footprint. It suggests how we might end up facing dramatic impacts, negative impacts on tourism and fishing that depend on clean coastlines to support tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of economic activity in my home State.

If we are going to think seriously about doing this, we need to think about the impacts. We need to ask whether the costs outweigh the benefits. When it comes to the Trump-Zinke plan to drill off the coast of Delaware, I am here to tell you that the potential costs dramatically outweigh the benefits. As you can see in this graphic, a spill the size of the Deepwater Horizon could devastate all of our beach communities and protected wildlife areas in Delaware and the region.

Again, protecting our coastlines, an idea supported by scientists and coastal residents alike, should not be a partisan issue. In Delaware alone, multiple city councils, all up and down our coast, have openly opposed offshore drilling through letters and resolutions they have sent to me and the rest of our congressional delegation.

Coastal lawmakers from both parties have opposed offshore drilling. I know for a fact the same is happening in virtually every other coastal State potentially impacted by this unwise decision. These are the people we should be listening to—the people who don’t just visit the coast for a week in the summer but who live on it, who rely on it, who have built their lives and their local economy around it.

Instead, as this decision shows, the Trump administration is prioritizing

the oil and gas industry and partisan politics over those of independent scientists, coastal residents, and the elected officials who speak for our coastal communities. That was made painfully clear when the Republican Governor of Florida, a close ally of the President, petitioned to shield just Florida from potential oil and gas exploration and production.

Sure enough, Florida promptly got a public promise from Secretary Zinke that its coastlines would be spared. I am sure Florida’s coastline is beautiful. In fact, I visited Florida’s coastline, and I can tell you it is beautiful. But guess what; so is Delaware’s. We deserve to be able to protect our coastline just as much as Floridians do. I invite Secretary Zinke to once again come to Delaware but to instead see the coastline and see these fragile resources and see what they have to offer for wildlife, for conservation, for fishing, for hunting, and for tourism.

Secretary Zinke promising to exempt Florida is the Trump administration deciding which States have to deal with oil and gas drilling based purely on partisan, political considerations. I think the state of our coastal communities and local economies shouldn’t be auctioned off to the highest bidder and shouldn’t be subject to partisan politics. Instead, they should be protected based on science and based on the views of coastal communities.

I am here today to voice my profound disappointment in this blatant neglect of local voices and the well-being of individual States and coastal communities. I came to the floor to fight for my State and to raise the local voices I have heard from our coastal communities. Our coastlines are just too fragile and too vital and too important to let partisan politics get in the way of their future.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

#### CHILD PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2017—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2386 are printed in today’s RECORD under

“Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, it is no secret that our country faces a major healthcare crisis and, in fact, a dysfunctional healthcare system.

We have some 30 million people who have no health insurance, and that number is going to go up in the coming year. We have even more people who are underinsured, with high deductibles and copayments. Our people pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, which means that millions of people who go to the doctor to get a prescription are simply unable to afford the bill. In fact, the description of that is the definition of a dysfunctional, failing healthcare system.

In the midst of all of that, there is another particular crisis dealing with primary healthcare, and that is that even when people do have health insurance in many parts of our country, they are finding it very hard to go to a doctor and to get in to a doctor to treat the ailments that they have. We fall behind many other countries in terms of our lack of emphasis on primary healthcare, which should be the heart and soul of any strong healthcare system. The bottom line is that when you get sick, you should be able to get to the doctor when you need to and not have to wait weeks and months in order to do so.

In the midst of a failing primary healthcare system, there is one very strong bright spot, and that is that for many decades now, in every State in this country, we have had community health centers run by the people themselves—democratically run—addressing the healthcare needs of those given communities. Today, in America, we have about 27 million people—27 million men, women, and children—who are accessing community health centers. In my own State of Vermont, one out of four Vermonters gets their primary healthcare through a community health center.

These centers do more than provide primary healthcare. They also provide dental care, an issue that is too often ignored when we talk about the healthcare crisis. They provide mental health counseling, which is more important now than perhaps it has ever been because of the opioid and heroin epidemic our country is experiencing. Equally important, they provide low-cost prescription drugs at a time when so many Americans cannot afford the medicines they need. That is what community health centers do, and they

do it well, and they do it cost effectively.

To my mind, there is no question but that there is strong bipartisan support here in the Senate and in the House for community health centers. Yet now we have gone over 4 months into the 2018 fiscal year, and we still have not reauthorized funding for community health centers. Frankly, I do not understand how it happens that when we have strong bipartisan support in the House and the Senate for programs that are working extremely well in every State in this country, the Republican leadership still has not reauthorized the community health center program. There is good bipartisan legislation right here in the Senate that has, I think, the support of virtually everybody in the Democratic caucus. Seven or eight Republicans are supporting it. It is the Blunt-Stabenow bill. It is a 5-year extension of community health centers reauthorization with a modest increase in the budget. If that bill came to the floor today, my guess is that it would get 70, 80 votes—maybe even more. We have gone 4 months into the fiscal year, and we still have not seen that bill reauthorized.

What is happening all over this country is that community health centers, which often struggle with recruitment and retention, are finding it harder than ever to retain the doctors, nurses, and other medical staff they need because applicants are looking around and saying: Why should I work at a community health center if I don't even know if it is going to be there next year? Why should I stay at a community health center if I can get a better job offer and I don't know if this community health center will be funded?

As a result of 4 months of inaction, community health centers all over this country are hurting. I say enough is enough. Right now, as soon as possible, we need to reauthorize the community health center program for at least 5 years, and we need to make sure there is adequate funding so that they can continue to do the excellent work they are doing all over this country.

#### OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. President, there is another issue that I would like to briefly touch upon. There has been a lot of discussion—appropriately so—about the opioid epidemic that is sweeping the United States. We have lost some 63,000 Americans as a result of opioid overdoses in 2016 alone. Families by the millions are being impacted.

I was in Brattleboro, VT, a few weeks ago, and they talked to me about what is happening to the children whose parents are addicted to opioids. They need to find foster homes for those children.

This is clearly an epidemic that has to be dealt with. We have to increase funding for prevention to make sure young people don't get swept up into the epidemic and also for treatment for those people who are addicted.

There is an issue that we have not touched upon enough, and that is hold-

ing the drug companies responsible and accountable for the products they brought into the market. As some people may recall, in April of 1994, the CEOs of the seven largest tobacco companies testified before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and the Environment in a historic hearing. What that hearing was about was, under oath, demanding to know what the executives from the tobacco industry knew and when they knew it. Did they know that their product was addictive? Did they know that tobacco caused cancer, heart disease, and other medical problems? They were asked to hold their hands up and under oath tell the committee what they knew.

I think it is now appropriate for the Senate to do the same with those drug companies that are producing opioids. I think we need to know what the drug companies knew in terms of the addictive qualities of those drugs. There is some evidence out there that suggests that drug companies, in fact, did know that the product they were selling was in fact addictive, but they forgot to tell the doctors—and certainly not the patients.

It is one thing for somebody to do something in ignorance, not knowing the impact of what you produce. That happens all the time. It is something very different if, in fact, the manufacturer of a product understands that the product causes addiction, that the product causes death. We need to get to the root of that issue. We need to know what the drug companies knew and when they knew that.

I would hope very much that in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, which has jurisdiction over this issue, we could bring the executives of those drug companies that produce these opioids before us, because not only are we talking about 60,000 people a year dying as a result of overdoses, but what we are talking about also is the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars in healthcare and law enforcement associated with opioid addiction.

I hope that we can move forward and have those executives come before us and tell us under oath what they knew and when they knew it, because I think the time is long overdue for us to hold them accountable.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

#### STEWARDSHIP FOR OUR DEMOCRACY

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, last fall I had the honor to stand in this Chamber and deliver remarks on the subject of a great and growing concern to me—the stewardship of our democracy at the hands of the most powerful figure in our government. I stand again today to sound the same alarm.

Words matter. Have we arrived at such a place of numb acceptance that we have nothing to say when the President of the United States casually suggests that those who choose not to

stand or applaud his speech are guilty of treason? I certainly hope not.

The one who levels such a charge knows neither the meaning of “treason” nor the power that the words of a President carry. If we are numb to such words, then we will surely regret that we failed to defend our colleagues in Congress against such a vile remark, but our silence will also mark the day we failed to recognize that this conduct in an American President simply is not normal.

I wish I could stand here today and say my words of last October have been proven wrong; that I had been unfair to inveigh against the daily sundering of our country; that I had been mistaken about the personal attacks; that I had exaggerated the threats against principles, freedoms, and institutions, the flagrant disregard for truth and decency, and the reckless provocations, most often for the pettiest and most personal reasons, reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with the fortunes of the people we have all been elected to serve—I wish I could say I had been wrong, but I cannot.

I have seen the President's most ardent defenders use the now-weary argument that the President's comments were meant as a joke, just sarcasm, only tongue in cheek, but treason is not a punch line.

The President said the State of the Union Address was meant to promote and encourage unity in government. Then why, less than a week later, follow up with this divisive and harmful rhetoric? Unity is not secured in a speech. It must be pursued constantly through appropriate behavior, mutual respect, and gained by effective leadership. Respect is earned, not commanded. Applause signals approval of an idea, not loyalty to one's country.

Our Democratic colleagues love this country as much as we do. To suggest otherwise is simply unconscionable. None of us in Congress pledge loyalty or service to the President. This is not a royal court. Our oath is to the Constitution and to the people. As Members of Congress, we must never accept undignified discourse as normal because of the requirements of tribal party politics.

None of this behavior should ever be regarded as normal. We must never allow ourselves to lapse into thinking this is just the way things are now.

We will get through this period, and when we do, we will look back at the destruction of our discourse and the attacks on our democratic values as nothing but a tragedy. May we also be able to say they were an aberration. That, my colleagues, is up to us. We must recognize this is aberrant, destructive behavior, whatever rationale its defenders may offer, and we must never shrink from opposing it, for it is in opposing this behavior that we defend our norms, our ideals, and our values. It is in opposing this behavior that we stand for decency.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the good news for American workers continues to roll in. Just take a look at the headlines from the last week: “Pfizer Plans \$5 Billion Boost in U.S. Manufacturing From Tax Law Changes”; “Cigna raises wages, benefits following tax law”; “CEO: Lehigh Valley small businesses to benefit from federal tax overhaul”; “Altria Group will pay \$3,000 bonus to all non-executive employees”; “Ozarks workers to receive bonuses, benefits thanks to tax changes”; “Charter Sets \$15 Minimum Wage”; “Lowe’s to pay U.S. staff \$1,000 bonus following tax reform.”

The number of companies increasing wages, boosting retirement contributions, or handing out bonuses thanks to tax reform continues to soar. Last week at this time, the number was over 250; now it is up over 300, and it keeps growing. Businesses are making plans to invest in their workers, raise wages, create new jobs, and invest in the U.S. economy. Fiat Chrysler, AT&T, Boeing, Home Depot, Great Western Bank in my home State of South Dakota, AaLadin Industries, Southwest, Best Buy, AccuWeather, Visa, Nationwide Insurance, Jet Blue—the list of companies announcing good news for American workers thanks to tax reform goes on and on.

The Nation’s largest private employer, Walmart, announced an increase in its starting wage for hourly employees and bonuses for eligible employees. It also announced expanded maternity and parental leave benefits and the creation of a new adoption benefit for employees. More than 1 million Walmart employees will benefit from these changes.

JPMorgan Chase announced that it will raise wages for 22,000 workers, add thousands of jobs, and open 400 new branches in the United States. It also plans to increase its lending to small businesses.

Tech giant Apple announced that thanks to tax reform, it will bring home to the United States almost \$250 billion in cash it has been keeping overseas and finally now invest it here in the United States. It also announced that it will create 20,000 new jobs and provide \$2,500 stock bonuses to its employees.

FedEx announced plans to expedite raises and invest \$1.5 billion to expand its FedEx Express hub in Indianapolis. It is also making a \$1.5 billion contribution to its pension plan.

Last week, ExxonMobil announced that thanks in part to tax reform, it will invest an additional \$35 billion in the U.S. economy over the next 5 years. That means a lot of new jobs and opportunities for American workers.

As I said before, I could go on and on. It is important to remember that this is just the beginning. To date, compa-

nies have barely experienced the benefits of tax reform, and already they are moving to invest in their workers and in the economy. As the benefits of tax reform continue to sink in and accrue, we can expect to see more growth, more jobs, and more opportunities for American workers.

The past month of good news is the reason we made business tax reform a key part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. We are deeply committed to immediate relief for the American people, which is why we cut tax rates, doubled the standard deduction, and doubled the child tax credit, delivering immediate, meaningful tax relief to middle-class families in this country. But we want more for American workers than just a tax cut, as valuable as those are; we also want American workers to have access to the kinds of jobs and opportunities that will set them up for security and prosperity for the long term. Good jobs, good wages, and good opportunities were in short supply during the last Presidency, and we are determined to improve things for American workers. So we took action to improve the situation for American businesses since the only way individual Americans thrive is if American businesses and the American economy thrive.

Prior to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, American businesses large and small were weighed down by high tax rates and growth-killing tax provisions. Plus, our outdated international tax rules left America’s global businesses at a competitive disadvantage in the global economy.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act changed all that. We lowered tax rates across the board for owners with small- and medium-sized businesses, farms, and ranches. We expanded business owners’ ability to recover investments they make in their businesses, which will free up cash that they can invest in their operations and their workers. We lowered our Nation’s massive corporate tax rate, which, up until January 1 of this year, was the highest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world. We brought the U.S. international tax system into the 21st century by replacing our outdated worldwide system with a modernized territorial tax system so that American businesses are not operating at a disadvantage next to their foreign competitors.

Now, just a month and a half into the new tax law, we are already seeing the results: increased investment in the American economy, job creation, higher wages, and benefit increases. As the tax law helps U.S. businesses large and small grow and thrive, we can expect to see a lot more benefits and opportunities for American workers in the future.

Before I close, Mr. President, I would like to say a couple words about the Defense appropriations bill we are taking up this week.

By the end of the Obama administration, our military was facing a serious readiness shortfall. The Obama admin-

istration’s failure to prioritize defense left our Armed Forces with manpower deficits and delayed the acquisition of 21st-century weapons and equipment.

The Defense appropriations bill we will vote on this week provides critical funding for restoring military readiness and would be a downpayment on equipping our troops with the resources they need to meet the threats of the 21st century. Unfortunately, passage of this bill is in jeopardy here in the Senate, thanks to Senate Democrats. Democrats have blocked a Defense appropriations bill six times over the past almost 3 years now, and they look set to block that bill once again. That is not acceptable.

Funding the government by continuing resolution rather than by appropriations bills is never ideal, but it is particularly problematic for the military. Under a continuing resolution, new programs are delayed, and the military’s ability to transfer money between accounts—for acquisition purposes, for example—is restricted. That is a big problem when the security of our Nation depends on the very programs and purchases the military makes.

Defense Secretary James Mattis has warned that “long-term CRs impact the readiness of our forces and their equipment at a time when security threats are extraordinarily high”—not to mention at a time when our military is already under extra pressure as it works to repair the deficits of the Obama years.

Passing a defense appropriations bill, instead of subjecting the military to a constant procession of continuing resolutions, would go a long way toward ensuring our military men and women are prepared to confront the threats that are facing our Nation. It is too bad that Democrats seem to be unable to look beyond politics to the needs of our military. Democrats may not pay a price for opposing this bill this week, but our military will.

It is high time that we pass the Defense appropriations bill. We need to stop this obstruction, stop this blocking. Six times in the last 3 years already they have blocked passage of Defense appropriations, and here we are again faced this week with yet another opportunity to provide the critical and necessary funding for the American military—our men and women in uniform who every single day are out there defending our freedoms—and it looks as though yet again the Democrats intend to block that critical, important funding. This needs to come to an end. This isn’t about politics; this is about America’s national security interests. I hope we can come together and recognize that and put the best interests of America’s national security and our men and women in uniform ahead of politics.

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.

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

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

#### OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak against the Trump administration's egregious attack on our pristine coastlines in the Pacific, the Atlantic, Alaska, and the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Dramatic increases in oil and gas development offshore pose a direct threat to our coastal economies in the United States, particularly in the Pacific Northwest. I know many of my colleagues are going to join me on the floor this afternoon to talk about this and about the specific impacts in their areas.

The draft leasing plan, which is what has been put forth by the Secretary of the Interior, is an unprecedented attempt to allow offshore oil and gas drilling in over 90 percent of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, including in Washington and Oregon.

The truth is that instead of creating new jobs in the oil and gas sector, the administration is poised to choose big oil jobs over the ocean-dependent industries like fishing, shipbuilding, and tourism on our coasts. I know this because I just traveled to many of our coastal communities in the State of Washington, which make their livelihoods off of fishing or tourism, that are very concerned by this proposal. And just yesterday, a public hearing was supposed to take place in Tacoma, WA, which was canceled. The Trump administration failed to account for the value of the existing robust coastal and ocean economies that could be jeopardized by expanding offshore drilling in those areas.

Our ocean-related economy is so important to our State that expanding drilling directly threatens the ocean environment and marine resources that support millions of jobs in construction, fishing, shipbuilding, tourism, recreation, and maritime transport. The ocean-related industries in the areas targeted by the administration's plan contribute over 2.2 million direct jobs, nearly \$75 billion in wages, and over \$150 billion in GDP. The reason I bring this up is that the economic benefits of these industries cannot be overstated: nearly \$8 billion from fishing and seafood, nearly \$70 billion from marine transport, and over \$125 billion from tourism and recreation.

We know that oil spills or other natural disasters related to oil and gas activities, such as the Exxon Valdez or the Deepwater Horizon disaster, can disrupt entire coastal economies. For example, if you took just the Deepwater Horizon spill in size and compared it to the coastal areas of Washington and Oregon, the impacted area would cover all of Washington and a big chunk of Oregon. We know that these can be devastating.

The shore-adjacent counties in the targeted areas host over 39 million jobs and contribute over \$2 trillion in wages. The economies of the shore-adjacent counties represent 65 percent of the affected coastal States' GDPs. That is just one way of saying that coastal States and their economies are big drivers in our U.S. economy and that they are extremely dependent on clean water, coasts, our oceans, and our fisheries.

The Washington coast economy relies on healthy, sustainable oceans, which support our fisheries in places such as Grays Harbor and Pacific County and in many other parts of our State, to make sure they have seafood processing, recreation, and tourism. Our Washington maritime economy is worth \$50 billion in economic activity and 191,000 jobs, and tourism on the coast adds jobs for anglers, charter boats, cruise guides, restaurants, hotels, and more, which are so iconic in the Pacific Northwest. They are the culture and heritage of our coastal communities.

The fact that so many recreational fishermen can be out on our healthy oceans and attracting more people to come and explore is so much a part of the Northwest that putting it at risk to oilspill activities or activities related to exploration is just not something these communities want to do. Just this past week, I received resolutions from various communities on our Pacific coast that urged that this idea be turned down.

The Washington and Oregon coasts are not really suited for oil and gas development. First of all, there are extreme sea states, treacherous storms, and the remote nature of our coastlines. As one of our maritime communities told me, it doesn't really have the resources for cleanup in the area. If a spill happened, who would be there to clean it up? In the meantime, our fishermen, if they have oil sheens behind their fishing boats, can be fined. If we are ready to fine fishermen for oil sheens behind their boats, why are we proposing a plan in the treacherous waters of the Pacific Northwest without having any idea who is going to clean up the mess?

Adding to the risk in the Pacific Northwest is the Cascadia Subduction Zone—one of the most dangerous faults in the United States. The Cascadia Subduction Zone is long overdue to create a significant earthquake. You hear from lots of people about this. In fact, after The New Yorker wrote a big story called "The Really Big One," many people from across the country emailed me to ask: Are we ready for this to happen? I can tell you, with what happened in Japan, people are very concerned about how we prepare for that in the Pacific Northwest. So it makes no sense to put an oil rig on one of the most high-risk, earthquake-prone zones in the United States.

In a 1991 spill, the dangerous and choppy seas prevented first responders

from being able to contain more of the spill. That is why I have fought to improve oilspill prevention and response in the State of Washington by deploying our Neah Bay tug, which is a full-time tug, to make sure we get boats safely through our waters; by increasing oilspill response equipment throughout the Strait of Juan de Fuca; and by pushing for the Coast Guard to invest in research on tar sands oil.

Those are some of the things we can do to protect ourselves, but we need to do much more.

We must weigh future decisions about where we should allow oil and gas exploration with the costs to our coastal economies.

We must incorporate the lessons we have learned from disasters such as Deepwater Horizon, which is part of this picture, or the Exxon Valdez in order to improve oilspill prevention, response, and safety. Herring fish from Prince William Sound are still very much impacted and have not fully recovered after the Exxon Valdez. So telling our fishermen that this is a great idea, that Washington fisheries, whether they be crab or other fisheries, should be susceptible to these kinds of spills—that is just not something our fishermen want to hear.

In addition to these efforts to drill off of our coasts—efforts that have been repeatedly blocked in the past—President Trump wants to roll back important safety regulations that were put in place after Deepwater Horizon, such as blowout preventer systems, well control, and production safety systems.

Now Secretary Zinke wants to open these coastal areas. Our State has been responding to his proposal for months and months. We gave very important data to say that this was not a good idea off the coast of Washington. It is interesting because Secretary Zinke made a last-minute decision with regard to Florida, which didn't turn in its information about its State on this issue. Then later, after a visit with the Governor, Secretary Zinke said that this was something he didn't want to see happen. The people of Washington don't want political games played. They want to have their say on this issue, and they want to make sure their voices are heard loud and clear. Our coastal economies are too important to us, from a jobs and cultural perspective, to go about even proposing the research on drilling in our coastal areas.

I am disappointed that yesterday there was a last-minute postponement of a public meeting that was supposed to take place in Tacoma, WA, to hear from our citizens about their opposition to expanding oil drilling off our coasts. I am not sure whether there will be a hearing rescheduled or exactly what was behind the cancellation, but it was one of the first opportunities Washingtonians could have had to express their views on this issue.

Based on the vocal opposition of our communities, I sent a letter to Secretary Zinke, with 15 of my House and Senate colleagues from the Pacific Northwest, calling on Washington and Oregon to not be part of a future lease program. I know that many people, including our Governor, have done the same. Members from the Pacific, Atlantic, gulf coast, and even Alaska are writing to Secretary Zinke, asking him to exclude their areas from future drilling activities.

I am very concerned that we are wasting taxpayer money in reanalyzing what we have analyzed before—that oil and gas development in the Pacific Northwest does not make sense for our coastal communities. We will fight to protect our fishing jobs, our tourism, our recreation, and all of the things that are part of the center of our culture on our coasts. We hope Secretary Zinke will follow science, protect our coastal economy, stop this foolish idea that drilling off of our coast is either necessary or prudent, and move about to protect our Federal lands.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. 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. CARPER. Mr. President, today I rise to address an issue that probably is not of great concern to the citizens of Arizona, but, certainly, it is of a lot of concern for people who happen to live on the east coast and the west coast of our Nation.

I join my colleagues on both coasts in opposition to the Trump administration's recent proposal to open up parts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Gulf of Mexico to more oil and gas drilling. For a long time, I have advocated for an "all of the above" strategy to meet our country's energy needs, as we move our country toward greater energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy and to energy independence. In my view, the administration's recent proposal to expand drilling off of our coasts into new areas is not necessary at this time. It is unnecessary at this time.

Just 8 years ago, we saw very clearly with the Deepwater Horizon disaster that oil spills do not respect State boundaries and that severe environmental and financial costs of oil spills last, in some cases, not just for years or decades but for generations. A spill anywhere along the east coast could easily affect the pristine beaches of Delaware and the vibrant coastal communities that rely on fishing, tourism, and recreational activities to drive their local economy.

Delaware's coast isn't all that long. It is about 25, 30 miles, from the Mary-

land line to just north of Lewes, DE. Each year, Delaware's coasts generate almost \$7 billion. Our beach communities in places like Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach, and surrounding areas support nearly 60,000 jobs in a little State with not quite 1 million people. It supports \$711 million in tax revenues. Again, the State budget is right around \$4 billion. Delaware may be a small State—I like to say we are the 49th largest State—but we have a lot of coast-related activities, and they are a big business for a little State, providing more than 10 percent of the First State's total employment, taxes, and business production. Jeopardizing the environmental and economic health of the entire Atlantic coast is the wrong move, and we simply think it is not worth the risk.

You don't just have to take my word for it. Experts, scientists, and residents living in communities along the coast that will be most impacted by this decision agree, especially since the threat of climate change continues to grow.

Delawareans are similarly concerned about the dangers posed by oil and gas exploration activities, including the use of seismic-testing air guns to search for offshore oil and gas deposits. In August 2016, roughly 18 months ago, over 40 State and local elected officials in Delaware sent a letter to the Department of Interior—this was in the last administration—expressing their opposition to proposed seismic surveys.

Their concerns, in my view, are well-founded. The negative impact of the oil and gas industry's seismic testing on ocean ecosystems and the life they support—from plankton at the base of the ocean food chain and all the way to whales at the top—is well documented. Despite the widespread opposition and proof of harmful consequences, proponents of increased drilling for oil would argue that oil and gas development could represent economic benefit in selected areas along our coast. But these areas are already the beneficiary of remarkable economic benefits derived from and contingent on a healthy, vital, and sustainable ocean environment off of our shores. As a result, these communities do not take the prospect of compromising these natural resources lightly, nor should we.

Do you know who also recognizes that coastal communities could be negatively impacted if their natural resources were compromised? The answer is our Interior Secretary, Mr. Ryan Zinke. In fact, that was the exact justification that Secretary Zinke used to carve Florida's gulf coast out of the Trump administration's proposal. Secretary Zinke pointed out that other States—like Louisiana, for example—are "working coasts" that are "very much different than a recreation-centric coast that's in Florida."

It seems to me that maybe, just maybe, the only real difference between Florida and every other coastal

State—including Delaware and up on north to Maine—that was not lucky enough to get an exemption from Secretary Zinke is that President Trump happens to have beach-front property in Florida. Believe me, I understand that a potential oilspill off of the Florida coast would be bad for business at Mar-a-Lago and that the President's guests probably don't want the view from the resort obstructed by offshore oil rigs. I understand that because an overwhelming majority of Delawareans feel the same way, and their voices deserve to be heard too.

It is not just the Delawareans or even Democrats who acknowledge that increased oil drilling off of our coasts is the wrong move. Republican Governors and lawmakers from States such as Georgia and South Carolina—and all the way up to Massachusetts and New Hampshire—have publicly stated their opposition to the Trump administration's plan because the risks are simply not worth the potential reward.

If the administration insists on proceeding with this proposal, then, it should carve out the cherished Delaware coast and similar areas along the Atlantic from any efforts to increase drilling. As we have heard said many times, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. In Florida, Secretary Zinke has clearly established the standard that should apply to any coastal area that would be part of an offshore leasing plan. If it is an area in which coastal activities and industries yield greater economic value and where local communities are solidly opposed, then those areas should get the same exemption that has been awarded to the Sunshine State of Florida.

This President is a businessman, and the numbers are clear. Increased drilling does not make economic sense. I urge President Trump to rethink this shortsighted proposal and to side with coastal residents from Maine to Miami.

Mr. President, I yield back.

We have been joined by my colleagues from Florida and Oregon, and I yield to one of them.

To whom shall I yield?

I am happy to yield to the ranking member of the Finance Committee.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank both of my colleagues, and I thank my colleague from Florida for his courtesy. I am going to be brief.

My views on this issue can be summed up in a tweet that I sent on Saturday. I was home having town meetings. I go to every county every year, and I had just wrapped up in Astoria, and I was on my way to Tillamook.

We stopped at Rockaway Beach, on the spectacular Oregon coast, and I decided that I would send a tweet and start it off with a question: Drilling on the Oregon coast? The answer was this: You have got to be kidding me. On my watch, that is going to be the policy we

are going to have for protecting the Oregon coast. That is what Oregonians are saying today, specifically. In fact, Oregonians are lining up to make their opposition known by protesting this proposal outside a meeting today, hosted by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in Salem.

We have a picturesque coastline that looks as if it is right out of a storybook. It is 362 miles that supports 22,000 jobs and a \$2 billion economy. Tourism, fishing, and recreation are all dependent on a healthy Pacific Ocean.

Our coast is entirely publicly owned, and it has been protected from oil and gas drilling for decades. That is, in large part, because we have learned harsh lessons from the past. In 1999, the freighter *New Carissa* ran aground off the coast of Coos Bay. The ship split apart, spilling tens of thousands of gallons of oil and diesel that covered our beaches in oil and tar balls. Some of that toxic mess remained on our beaches for almost a decade, costing tens of millions of dollars to clean up.

The thousands of fishermen, recreation business owners, and guides shouldn't have to go to bed at night hoping there is not a spill or an explosion—or risk their livelihoods on the good will of oil and gas executives. To make matters even more ominous, just days before announcing his intention to open up our entire coastline to oil and gas drilling, Secretary Zinke reversed basic safety standards for workers that were adopted after the Deepwater Horizon disaster. So what you have here is a double whammy. First, gut safety standards for oil and gas workers on offshore rigs. That is right; gut the safety standards for oil and gas workers. Second, increase the probability that these workers are going to be put in danger in the first place.

As I said on Saturday on my way to those town meetings, the people of my State, Oregonians, overwhelmingly do not want to be a part of any of this. Secretary Zinke went ahead and made a wrong decision with respect to coastal drilling without any input from Oregon. Our commercial and recreational fisheries industry—hard-working families who depend on healthy fishing stocks—had no seat at the table. In fact, an entire west coast industry was left out of whatever discussions happened between the oil executives and the Trump officials in the back room of the Department of the Interior.

One day after his decision, Mr. Zinke met with the Republican Governor of Florida, and my colleague who will speak next has been eloquent on that point, describing the plan as a threat to the environment and economy of his home State. That was enough for Secretary Zinke to let Florida off the hook, but there has been an outcry of opposition from the Governors of 15 coastal States, including mine. We have raised the very same environmental and economic concerns, yet Secretary Zinke seems deaf to our voices. I guess the only voice that is

really relevant is that of a Republican Governor, and that is about as nakedly political as it gets around Washington—a big gift for the oil and gas companies but one that poses an enormous danger to the economies and environment of local communities along our coast.

Finally, the decision doesn't make sense in terms of energy policy. Our country is more energy-secure now than ever. The International Energy Agency reports that within 10 years the United States will move from being a net importer of oil to a net exporter. So Secretary Zinke's scheme to expand offshore drilling is going to benefit—let's acknowledge that—a handful of Big Oil interests and then leave hard-working fishing families and coastal business owners to pick up the bill. That is not how we do things on our west coast.

The lasting economic uncertainty and ultimate environmental degradation are not worth it, and today, on behalf of the people of Oregon, I urge Secretary Zinke to rescind his proposal.

I yield the floor and thank my colleague from Florida for his courtesy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I make an announcement and then defer to Senator KING and then that it come back to me for my statement about offshore drilling.

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

Mr. NELSON. Thank you, Mr. President.

#### FALCON HEAVY ROCKET

Just a few minutes ago, the largest rocket since the Moon program, the Saturn V, launched from the Kennedy Space Center. People across the world saw it on TV, as well as over the internet. Thousands of people lined the beaches at the Kennedy Space Center.

Perhaps even more impressive is that this rocket, with three Falcon 9s strapped together—27 engines—took a payload for its first test flight. It was so successful that the two side Falcon 9s, with the center core of the Falcon 9—we watched in amazement as they returned to Earth, 100 yards apart on two landing zones at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

At liftoff, the Falcon Heavy generates 500 million pounds of thrust and is twice as powerful as any other rocket currently flying. Especially with the ability to land and reuse the boosters, it promises to be a very affordable way to get to space.

The test launch of the Falcon Heavy is a spectacular demonstration of the comeback of Florida's Space Coast and of the U.S. commercial launch sector, which is succeeding in a big way. Last year, we tied the all-time record for the number of U.S. commercial launches. That is good news for the civil space program; it is good news for national security; it is good news for employment in the United States; and

it is great news for jobs and the economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, first, I thank the Senator from Florida for yielding and congratulate him on the success of this launch in Florida. As he said, it is a huge boost, if you will, for the space industry in his State and a huge advantage for our country. It is a really amazing technological feat that I think will be positive.

#### OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING

Mr. President, I rise just for a few minutes to talk about the decision to allow drilling for oil and gas off of our coasts. This is a very consequential and serious decision involving important policy questions, and it has important implications for all of the coastal States and indeed for our country.

My concern, to echo some of the comments that have already been made, is that there was very little, if any, consultation with the interested parties along our coastal States. In Maine—which, by the way, according to geographers I have talked to, has the longest coast of any State in the country; I am sure I will get some debate about that from some of my colleagues—we depend upon our coast. Tourism and visitation to our beaches and coastal communities are a billion-dollar industry—the largest single employer in our State. So that is an enormous economic engine that is currently working and running and powering at least a portion of the economy of our State. Of course, on my tie, I have lobsters, which is a \$1.7 billion-a-year industry in Maine, and it promises to be even stronger as processing is developed. We also have an offshore fishing industry—shrimp, shellfish. It is enormously important. It is a part of who we are in the State of Maine.

In my view, this is a pretty straightforward decision. What are the benefits, and what are the costs? The benefits are speculative at best, limited at best, and the costs are immediate and an enormous challenge for us. The cost of a single incident along our coast, which would affect our lobster industry or our visitor industry in the summertime and in the spring and the fall, would be catastrophic for our State.

I hope that the Department of the Interior will back off and enter into a process by which they make this decision by talking to the people who are most directly involved. I think this is a very important issue for all of the coastal States, and some may say that this could be advantageous to us. But let's get the facts, let's get the data, and let's understand the upside and the downside.

The entire Maine congressional delegation, nonpartisan—that is, a Democrat, an Independent, and two Republicans—came out against this designation within hours of its having been made. This is one where I think the people of our State, through their

elected representatives, need to be heard.

I hope that the Department of the Interior will back away from this unilateral decision, make it in a much more considered way, listen to the residents, the industries, and the businesses that are affected by a decision like this, and let our States have the important role that they should play in a decision of this magnitude, affecting their citizens.

As I said, I think this is an important decision. It deserves much deeper consideration, and I believe the people of Maine will very promptly say that this isn't something we are willing to support.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I see my good friend the Senator from New Jersey here, and I just want to make a few comments, since I have been at the center of this firestorm.

I am here again to talk about the mess that has been created by the 5-year drilling plan. Some of the reasons I have talked about it so much go beyond the fact that it is disastrous and dangerous, not only for all the coastal States but for our State of Florida, which has more beaches than any other State and is surrounded by test range. Indeed, just today, the largest rocket since the Apollo program to the Moon has brought back two of its boosters that didn't have to fall into the ocean. But some may, and you simply cannot have oil rigs out there in the Atlantic where we are testing our military rockets, such as today—a commercial rocket, the Falcon Heavy, has dropped its initial stages. The same is true with the military on the west coast.

The largest testing and training area for the U.S. military in the world is the eastern Gulf of Mexico off of Florida. That is why it is off limits in law for another 5 years, until the year 2022, and we need to expand that.

Well, my colleagues have endured me so many times as I have talked about how disastrous it would be, but now we have a different wrinkle with the Department of the Interior. They first published a proposal that would open up nearly every inch of coastline of the entire United States. You are hearing all of these coastal Senators speak against it.

They pick up on the eastern gulf off of Florida; since it is off limits in law until year 2022, they pick up there and start wanting to drill out there. Can you imagine what that would do to the U.S. Air Force, which runs the eastern gulf test range?

Well, look what happened. They published this, and then the very next day—24 hours later—the Secretary of the Interior jetted off to Tallahassee for a 20-minute press conference at the Tallahassee airport and announced that Florida was off the table. It was an obvious, transparent, political

stunt, but it created enormous uncertainty about what was truly under consideration for drilling.

What did “off the table”—in order to try to satisfy Florida's incumbent Governor—mean? Does it apply to the Atlantic coast of Florida, as well, or just to the gulf coast? Is it the whole moratorium area of the eastern gulf? Does it include the Straits of Florida off the delicate Florida Keys, or will it be carved in half to appease the oil industry in the eastern Gulf of Mexico?

The administration—specifically Secretary Zinke—is playing fast and loose with a process that affects millions of people in the State of Florida, and Floridians deserve to know what is going on. That is why I sounded the alarm immediately, within 10 minutes after Secretary Zinke's announcement.

I have been through this process before—ever since I was a young Congressman representing the east coast of Florida—with a Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, who wanted to drill off the east coast of Florida. In fact, back then, in the mid-1980s, we were launching our military rockets, just as we do today, and the space shuttle was dropping its solid rocket boosters.

These 5-year plans are supposed to be developed over the course of 1 or 2 years with extensive input from the public, agency staff, the industries involved, and the environmental community. Five-year plans aren't supposed to be a goody bag of political favors, and they can't be undone by the Secretary's press conference or a tweet. That was confirmed by a career employee, Walter Cruickshank, the Acting Director of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. He said that at a House committee hearing. It is no wonder the attorneys general from 12 coastal States wrote to the Secretary to warn him that he should terminate the draft proposal—terminate it entirely—or else they were going to pursue their appropriate legal avenues.

The whole process has been fraught with confusion because it was a political stunt, and as a result, we have a bunch of Senators out here fighting to make known what is happening. At the same time, the Interior Department is trying to open up America's entire coastline to drilling. They are also working to undo all the commonsense safety standards that were put in place after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill that spilled 5 million barrels of oil into the gulf and killed 11 workers on the rig. Those safety standards include requirements like making sure an independent third party, such as a professional engineer, certifies the offshore drilling safety equipment, such as the blowout preventer. That malfunctioned 5 miles below the surface of the gulf when it did not cut off the oil at the wellhead on the floor of the ocean, and it allowed those 5 million barrels to be spilled. Now Secretary Zinke wants to go backward in time and reverse all of those safety standards. The American

people deserve better than this. Floridians certainly deserve better than this.

I want to thank my fellow Senators for getting out here and raising such a ruckus so that we can get the American people to focus on what is happening and the political stunts that are being done by the Secretary of the Interior.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, first of all, let me congratulate my colleague from Florida on the most recent historic launch. There is no one who has been a greater advocate for America's space program than Senator NELSON. I appreciate his leadership as well on this issue, which goes all the way from Florida, across the entire Atlantic and, of course, the Pacific as well.

I rise in strong opposition to the Trump administration's offshore drilling plan. I am here to speak on behalf of New Jersey's shore businesses—the restaurants, the bait-and-tackle shops, and the bed-and-breakfasts that depend on clean beaches to succeed. Their businesses are the lifeblood of the Jersey Shore. Their voices deserve to be heard. Their livelihoods are on the line. Yet this administration remains solely focused on what is good for Big Oil's bottom line, never mind the consequences for our economy, the health of the planet, or our vibrant coastal communities.

The Interior Department's offshore drilling plan reads like a wish list for oil industry executives. Clearly, the Trump administration didn't consult my constituents when drafting this plan. By the way, we had already gone through a 5-year plan, so there were supposed to be 5 years before we revisited this, and now we are back at it again. They didn't consult the shop owners in Asbury Park or the fishermen in Belford or the innkeepers in Cape May, because if they had, they would have learned that our shoreline is an economic powerhouse for our State.

Each year, New Jersey's tourism industry generates \$44 billion in economic activity, directly and indirectly supporting nearly 10 percent of the State's workforce. Likewise, our seafood industry supports over 31,000 jobs, and we are home to one of America's largest saltwater recreational fisheries, supporting over 16,000 jobs. Together, the homes and businesses along the Jersey Shore encompass almost \$800 billion in property values.

All of this adds up to a simple reality: Clean coasts are vital to the economic security of millions of New Jerseyans. The same holds true for towns up and down the Atlantic shoreline. Yet the Trump administration plans to ignore the concern of the communities that have the most to lose. They ignore the more than 120 municipalities, the 1,200 elected officials, the 41,000 businesses, and the 500,000 fishing families from up and down the east

coast who voiced their opposition the last time oil and gas drilling was being considered. They ignore concerns from the Pentagon and NASA about disruptions to their operations from drilling in the Atlantic. They ignore the opposition of my west coast colleagues to drilling in the Pacific. They ignore the Department of the Interior's own finding that the Arctic drilling comes with a 75-percent chance of an oilspill in a treacherous and challenging environment. Simply put, the Trump drilling plan ignores everyone except Big Oil.

What is happening here is a dream scenario for the oil industry, but it is a nightmare for our shore communities. It is a gift to corporate polluters at the expense of our coastal economies.

By the way, I love these commercials that I see that talk about American energy independence. As you have heard my colleague Senator WYDEN say before, we are now an exporter of oil. Well, how is it that you are exporting oil? You are drilling it here in the continental waters of the United States, but you are exporting it abroad for others to use. It seems to me that if you are drilling on Federal lands and waters, you should keep it here for domestic energy consumption to keep the price down and to keep energy security. That is real energy security, not having Big Oil drill here and then export it all over the world so that they can make a profit. I don't know how that makes us more energy secure here at home.

Make no mistake—this administration's massive expansion of offshore drilling is just the beginning. They are also working to dismantle minimal safety standards for offshore drilling. That is right. The Trump administration not only wants more offshore drilling, it also wants to permit more dangerous offshore drilling.

The Interior Department reportedly seeks to weaken the well control rule—the critical safety standards put in place after the Deepwater Horizon tragedy, which taught us something: If you drill, you will spill. If you drill, you will spill. At some point, that will happen. During Superstorm Sandy, which took place along the east coast of the Atlantic, imagine if we had oil rigs off the shore of New Jersey. We would have had spills. We would have had spills. So instead of saving lives and saving our environment and the economic consequences that flow from that, the Trump administration's actions aim to save the industry \$90 million.

During his Senate confirmation, Secretary Zinke promised to “work with rather than against local communities in the states.” Well, it sure feels as though he is working against New Jersey. The Secretary has shown no concern for the Jersey Shore communities that would be devastated by an oilspill—the shuttered businesses, the destroyed industries, the massive job losses, and the birthright of every New Jerseyan to go to the Jersey Shore and

enjoy its pristine beaches. That is why it is all the more baffling that Secretary Zinke recently said that after hearing from concerned Florida businesses and public officials, he would consider exempting the State from the disastrous Trump drilling plan. When asked about the decision, the Secretary said that “local voices count.”

Well, I am happy if that is what is going to happen for Florida, but guess what—if it is good enough for Mar-a-Lago, it certainly should be good enough for the Jersey Shore. That is why every Member of the New Jersey congressional delegation, Republicans and Democrats alike, recently joined me on a letter inviting Secretary Zinke to visit the Jersey Shore. We would be happy to have him meet with community leaders, business owners, and families who depend on clean coasts. If he wants to focus on the economics of oil drilling, I suggest he start with the thousands of people who would be out of a job if oil starts washing up on our beaches.

The Secretary needs to hear from constituents of mine like Charles from Tom's River, who recently wrote to say:

We already have some shoreline concerns, thanks to Super Storm Sandy. We definitely don't need another threat to our economy.

Jeanne from New Brunswick wrote:

Tourism is a major New Jersey business. Our beaches are pristine and must be protected.

He needs to hear from any of the thousands of New Jerseyans who have signed my COAST Anti-Drilling Act citizen petition to permanently ban drilling in the whole Atlantic Ocean.

The Jersey Shore is a national treasure, home to generations of family vacations, successful small businesses, and vibrant coastal communities that are visited by people from across the Atlantic coast, Canadians who come down and spend their money at our shore, and so many others. That may not mean anything to ExxonMobil or BP. It may not mean anything to President Trump or Secretary Zinke. But it means something to me. That is why we are here today to give voice to New Jerseyans who have gone unheard. We will not stand silent while this administration tries to auction the Jersey Shore off to the highest bidder—not without a fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of Rhode Island's contributions to the cultural life of our Nation came from two brothers who grew up in Cumberland, RI, Bobby and Peter Farrelly. The Farrelly brothers did a number of movies. One of them was famously called “Dumb and Dumber.”

This is a good example of dumb and dumber. It was dumb when President Obama opened the south Atlantic coast to the prospect of oil drilling. When he did, the reaction was immediate and

profound. From Norfolk, VA, all the way down the red south Atlantic coast to St. Augustine, FL, city after city, county after county, coastal community after coastal community passed resolutions saying: Get that offshore drilling out of here. We don't want it. It was a sweep of that Republican shoreline. It was called the resolution revolution because so many resolutions were passed saying: Get your oil drilling the heck away from our coasts.

Ultimately, the Obama administration got smart, and in the final approval, there was no drilling in the Atlantic and no drilling in the Pacific. They gave some reasons for their choice: strong local opposition was one, conflicts with other ocean uses was another, market dynamics was a third, and comments received from Governors was a fourth.

So, in the wake of that, here comes the Trump administration, and they have seriously gone from dumb to dumber, to go right back into this fight, where it blew up in the Obama administration's face among the red State communities of the Atlantic coast. Good luck finding support for this up in New England.

In New England, our ocean economy was valued just a few years ago at over \$17 billion. It employs about a quarter of a million people. Who thinks we are going to walk away from that? Who thinks we are not going to defend that ocean economy against an idea as dumb as offshore drilling in the Atlantic? We are not going to permit it.

I have authored, with my House colleague DAVID CICILLINE, legislation that the whole New England Senate representation supports, to ban this as a matter of Federal law; to stop this. The attorneys general of States from Maine down to North Carolina, including Massachusetts, Delaware, Rhode Island, of course, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, and Virginia, all have spoken out against this and I expect will litigate against it. Our Governor, Gina Raimondo, has come out strongly against this incredibly dumb idea, and she has been joined by Republican Governors in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland, and South Carolina because this is such a dumb idea.

Why would this administration pursue such a dumb idea, that Republican Governors oppose, that blew up in the face of the Obama administration along the south Atlantic coast when they tried it, that would infringe upon and damage critical coastal economies in States that are Republican and Democratic? Why would they do such a stupid thing?

Well, Attorney General Kilmartin of Rhode Island has one suggestion: “This decision by the administration is clearly driven by the oil and gas industry.”

Huh. No kidding. This administration is bought and paid for by the oil and gas industry. Throw in coal, and we have the complete lock, stock, and barrel sale. We have complete industry toadies in the responsible agencies of



government and climate denial of the most flagrant and obtuse variety coming out of the White House. I mean, it is nonsense land, except for the fact that it keeps the oil and gas and coal money coming to prop up the Trump administration and the Republican Party. We are not going to stand for it. It is crooked. It will not go.

Chris Brown is the head of the Commercial Fishermen's Association of Rhode Island. He is adamant that "oil drilling is something that is incredibly threatening and directly adverse to our well-being."

We are going to stand and fight for our fishing communities.

Our environmental community is wildly against this: "The last thing our coast needs is oil drilling and all of the risks that go with it," says our lead environmental organization, Save the Bay.

I will close with the Providence Business Journal, the voice of the Rhode Island business community, which just editorialized:

Fossil fuels, no matter where they are harvested, are putting coastal areas across the globe in danger as sea levels rise. In the name of national energy independence, public policy would hasten the devastating impacts of burning fossil fuels and make much of Rhode Island and other low-lying areas uninhabitable.

At a time when renewable energy in the United States and across the world is becoming less expensive, and the effects of climate change are becoming more pronounced, pulling more fossil fuels out of the ground is not a wise decision, and one that hopefully will be rescinded before any drilling rigs park themselves off Block Island.

That is the voice of Rhode Island's business community.

If you want to take a look at why this bothers us, take a look at the footprint of the BP oilspill laid on the map of the New England coast. There is Boston, there is Long Island, there is Narragansett Bay, and that is Rhode Island. That is the footprint of the mess the oil industry left when it blew up its facility in the middle of the gulf. That is what they did, and we don't need that up in New England.

We have offshore industries that are vibrant, that support our economy, that are welcome, that have long traditions and histories. We do not need oil industry invaders coming where they are not wanted because they have bought their way into the Trump administration with their political contributions and their dark money. That will not stand.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I appreciate that Senator CANTWELL organized this time for a group of us to come to the floor to speak about this disastrous, insane plan to drill throughout 90 percent of our coastal shelf. This, the Interior Secretary tells us, is part of President Trump's directive to rebuild the offshore oil and gas program, but he also conveyed it was

the President's directive to "take into consideration the local and State voices."

Well, certainly the draft plan—if you can call it a draft—didn't take into account local or State voices. Had the Interior Secretary bothered to actually consult, this is what he would have heard from people in Oregon. Our Governor, Kate Brown, denounced the plan, saying: "In what universe would this be okay?"

Noah Oppenheim, the executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, stated:

The Trump administration wants to put fish and fisheries at significant risk while lining the pockets of their oil industry co-conspirators. Meanwhile, more frequent oil spills and more intense ocean acidification and ocean warming are guaranteed to ensue.

Charlie Plybon, the Oregon policy manager at Surfrider Foundation, an organization made up of everyday people passionate about protecting our oceans and our beaches, shared this opinion:

We are united in an understanding of the threats which offshore oil drilling poses to our coastal economy, jobs and culture we have today. We will not gamble our ocean resources with dangerous oil exploration and polluting drilling activities that put our future and that of generations to come at risk.

Charlie went on to convey the enormous disparity between the economy that is driven by fishing and ocean recreation and by tourism as compared to the economy driven by oil drilling and how the former completely outweighs the latter.

The Association of Northwest Steelheaders is one of the oldest and most cherished conservation and sport fishing advocacy organizations in the Pacific Northwest. Their statement is the following:

This proposal stands to go against everything we believe in. Drilling for oil and gas off the coast of Oregon compromises our fisheries, our coastal economies, and our values.

These folks know what they are talking about.

The Tribes weighed in through the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Their resolution conveys opposition to "any proposal to open Pacific offshore waters from California to and including Alaska to offshore drilling."

Scott McMullen, the chairman of the Oregon Fishermen's Cable Committee—a group of troll fishermen who have been very involved in negotiations involving the fiber optic cable lines that are laid in the ocean—said:

The Oregon fishing industry has had a long history of good stewardship of the fishing grounds which are open for multiple uses. Oil platforms in our fishing grounds would deny access to the resources that fishermen, fish processors and thriving coastal communities depend on. To take away the right to use our historical shared fishing grounds by awarding drilling rights for this single industrial use would be wrong.

Dale Beasley had this opinion:

As president of the Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association and Coalition of

Coastal Fisheries, our position on any fixed structures in the ocean and particularly oil platforms is simple—NO NO AND NO again.

Our members rely 100% on clean sustainable marine waters for 100% of our families income.

Terry Thompson, Lincoln County commissioner, stated:

The state of Oregon has been a leader in the nation in terms of protecting our environment while responsibly utilizing our natural resources.

We banned oil and gas development years ago because of the potential risk to our ocean, which is one of the most productive places in the world.

The President's proposal to allow oil and gas development is an attempt to override the will of the people and shows a complete disconnect between the Administration and the people of the West.

I think these voices—the voices of the crabbing industry and the salmon industry, the fishing industry and the tourism industry—these voices of the coastal economy, reverberate in absolute parallel and passionate opposition to drilling off our coast for oil.

Before the drilling takes place, there are massive amounts of explosions that are conducted in order to create the maps of what is under the surface for potential drilling. That alone—just the preparation for drilling—is deeply disturbing, but imagine what an oilspill looks like.

This is a map of the Washington and Oregon coast, with the outline overlaid with the gulf oilspill. It covers a section that is the entire length of the State of Oregon and the State of Washington. Imagine those hundreds of miles of soiled beaches, the oil's impact on the ecosystem of the fisheries. There is no way this risk is justified for pumping a few more barrels of oil—which, I might point out, should be left in the ground anyway because burning oil that we are extracting from the ground is steadily raising the temperature of the planet and the temperature of our oceans, which absorb the vast majority of the heat from burning fossil fuels, and that is creating changes, from ocean acidification to the bleaching of the coral reefs, and all kinds of impacts on the surface of the continents.

So I say to the Interior Secretary, you have been given a mission by the President of the United States, which, as you have stated, is to take into consideration local and State voices, so simply hear those voices, and then take Oregon out of the equation, take Washington out of the equation, take California out of the equation, take every State that objects out of this equation, and, by the way, it would be wise to take the rest out as well.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I wish to thank Senator CANTWELL for organizing the opportunity this afternoon to speak about this egregious decision that was made by the Trump administration that will allow for drilling for

oil off of the beaches of the United States of America. It is an absolute disgrace that this administration is doing something like this. What we have on our hands is a President who has a hard time listening to his own message.

Last week, he was bragging about how much new oil we are discovering in America. He is so proud of this. In fact, we export a million and a half barrels of oil a day. Listen to that again: We export a million and a half barrels of oil a day. Where do we send this oil? We send it to China. We send it to other countries.

Is the President happy with that? No, he says we need more oil; we need to drill off of our beaches—notwithstanding what that will do to our tourism industry, to our fishing industry, or to any industry that does business along the coastlines of our country. Ultimately, what would be the purpose to which this oil would be put? Export the oil.

So how does that formula really work? The oil companies come to the beaches of Massachusetts or any other State. They set up rigs and start to drill for oil. They find the oil. Then, they sell that oil somewhere else around the world. Meanwhile, people who live off of those beaches in Massachusetts or any other State run all the risk if there is an accident, as there was in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 in the BP oilspill.

So the risks are run by the States that don't want the drilling, and the benefits all run to the oil companies that get to sell this oil around the world. It makes perfect sense because "GOP" really stands for "gas and oil party." That is what they have turned themselves into. It is whatever Big Oil wants, even if State after State after State says it does not want this to happen.

Every single State, from Maine down to Florida, was going to be giving permission to the oil companies to commence drilling, but the Governor of Florida—a Republican Governor—protested. He said he didn't want there to be drilling off the coast of Florida, after Florida had already been included in the plan.

So what happens? All of a sudden, the Trump administration decides that they are going to have a gator giveaway. All of a sudden, Florida gets to be exempt. Why would Florida be exempt? Maybe because it has a Republican Governor. Maybe because that Republican Governor is thinking about running for the U.S. Senate. So maybe, just maybe, this Governor, who once supported drilling off of the coast of Florida, all of a sudden says: The people don't want it. They don't want the beaches of Florida to be endangered.

So what happens? Governor Scott from Florida all of a sudden starts shedding crocodile tears about how much he cares about the beaches, even though he had always been supportive of offshore drilling. That leads to the

gator giveaway where, all of a sudden, Florida is not in.

I don't think it is incidental that Mar-a-Lago is actually in Florida, as well, and maybe Donald Trump hadn't been fully consulted by Secretary Zinke and the Department of the Interior on this inclusion of Florida. But before you knew it, all of a sudden, Florida was no longer on the map, but every other State that doesn't have a Republican Governor running for the Senate, that doesn't have a President of the United States with a summer resort, a winter resort, a spring and summer resort—Mar-a-Lago—is stuck with this decision.

The problem with what they did is this: It is obviously arbitrary and capricious. It is obviously a violation of the Administrative Procedures Act. It is obviously something that will never stand up in court—that after a decision is made to include every State, all of a sudden Florida comes up. It will never hold up. That will be the basis of the case made by the attorneys general and all of the business and environmental interests that will be suing on this issue.

So what part of this really works? It is oil that will be drilled for at the risk of despoiling the beaches and the fishing industry—the tens of billions of dollars in the fishing and tourism industry—with the benefits running to one single industry.

The American Petroleum Institute is trying to have it both ways. On the one hand, they are saying: We are at the boom time of all times in oil drilling in the United States. We are energy independent. This is the boom time.

Donald Trump is sounding the same exact way, boasting across the country about his energy policies, his fossil-fuel-first policies. He keeps saying that he has ended the war on energy. It is not true because just last week he imposed a 30-percent tariff on importation of solar panels. So he is talking about no war on his favorite energy technology. But if he doesn't like them, they get a 30-percent increase in tariffs on the very technologies that, in polling, 80 percent of all Americans want to see increased inside of our country.

We are going to be fighting this every single step of the way. It is immoral, it is unnecessary, and it violates the goals that individual States have in order to advance their own economies. I, personally, am going to exhaust all available legislative tools to fight this attempt by President Trump to allow drilling off of the coast of Massachusetts, the east coast, and nearly every other single mile of coastline in the United States, with the exception of Florida.

That includes using the Congressional Review Act, which allows for agency action to be undone by a simple majority in both Chambers. I plan to pursue such a Congressional Review Act resolution if the Trump administration moves forward with this reck-

less plan. We will not stop until this plan is blocked and dead and our coastlines are protected once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today to voice my strong opposition to the Trump administration's latest move to override the will of Washington State's citizens—our fishing families, our small business owners, our environmentalists, and our outdoor enthusiasts—by opening our coastal waters to harmful oil and gas drilling.

The continental waters on the west coast are one of our State's richest and most cherished national resources, sustaining communities along the Pacific Northwest for centuries and helping to define our regional culture for generations. It would be hard to overstate just how important Washington's coastal waters are to our local way of life.

Many of us count on our coasts for our food or work. Washington State coasts are home to numerous seafood- and tourism-dependent communities, and they support a \$50 billion maritime economy and nearly 200,000 maritime-related jobs—not to mention countless families and travelers who are seeking outdoor recreation and flock to our shores throughout the year to experience the natural beauty and sport of our iconic shorelines.

To put it simply, Washingtonians don't take our healthy coasts for granted. We know that keeping our shores pristine isn't just about leisure and scenic views. Preserving our coastal waters is a critical factor in promoting a healthy regional ecosystem and an economy that support vital jobs and industries, fish and wildlife, and public health opportunities that many of us—our families, friends, and neighbors—rely on.

So I, too, was deeply disappointed but, ultimately, unsurprised when Interior Secretary Zinke announced the Department's plan to ignore the existing oil and gas leasing program that was just approved a few years ago and instead moved to draft and implement a new program that would allow offshore oil and gas drilling in nearly all of our Nation's continental waters, including our coastal waters off of Washington State.

Despite decades of factfinding and public input that already established the need to protect ecologically sensitive areas like our coasts, it appears, once again, that President Trump and his Cabinet have decided to prioritize Big Oil and the relentless pursuit of profit over the interests of Washington State families and with virtually no regard to what their one-sided policy proposals may mean for our environment, for our public health, or for our economy.

To add insult to injury, I was even more appalled when it was reported just a few days later that Secretary Zinke was planning to remove Florida's waters from consideration after

meeting with their Governor and hearing their concerns. I will leave it to others to wonder what exactly persuaded Secretary Zinke to remove Florida from that list, but I can't say I was stunned when that courtesy was not extended to Washington State, even after our Governor made the exact same request.

Later, while I was on my way back home from the other Washington and concerned about the potentially damaging impacts of Secretary Zinke's decision on our Washington State ecosystem, I decided to ask my followers on Twitter to join me in sending a message to the Interior Department and tweet photos of some of Washington State's many important and pristine coastal areas. I just have to say that the response was overwhelming.

Within hours, my timeline was filled with photos of beaches and coasts all along Washington State's shoreline, from Ruby Beach to Bellingham Bay to Olympic National Park to Orcas Island—photos of painted sunsets on the Puget Sound, the majestic calm of Cape Flattery, and of rainbows arching across the Bell Island shore, photos of children running across the beaches of Kalaloch, and photos of fishermen unloading their haul in Salmon Bay. I even received photos from other coastal areas in the Pacific Northwest. They were all from residents who want their pristine shorelines preserved, and they were eager to raise their voices to safeguard our coasts.

I was inspired as I scrolled through this growing and beautiful collection of photos that illustrated the significance of our coasts, not just to our State's economy and environment but to our shared culture and identity. Our shores are where we fish, swim, exercise, and work, but also where our wildlife roams, our children play, and where we make lasting memories with our loved ones.

It is not too late for the Interior Department to reverse its misguided decision to expand offshore oil and gas drilling and instead focus on maintaining and strengthening existing regulations protecting this country's continental waters.

I really hope Secretary Zinke and officials at the Interior Department finally hear loud and clear what Washingtonians have been saying for decades—that the extreme environmental and ecological dangers posed by offshore oil and gas drilling are too great a risk for Washington State families. I hope they move quickly to reschedule the public meeting they were supposed to hold yesterday in Tacoma, so people from Washington can share their concerns with the Department directly.

I want to remind my colleagues and everyone in our country who cares about our environment that this fight is far from over. As we have learned over the last year, it is important that we continue to make our voices heard again and again to ensure that this administration backs down from this

reckless proposal and puts the interest of Washington State families first.

As a voice for Washington State here in the Senate, I am going to continue fighting against the Trump administration's efforts to leverage our environment to boost Big Oil's bottom line, and I know I will never stop standing with our families, workers, and small businesses to protect our coasts today and for future generations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, we have an opportunity before us today to fund key priorities that we all agree are important. The American people elected all of us to do a job, and that job is to provide for the most important functions of our government.

For far too long, politics has prevented us from committing the resources necessary to sustain the most critical part of our government—the military that keeps us safe. This is a chance to cast aside partisan differences and give the Department of Defense the stable and consistent funding it needs so it can rebuild readiness and execute its mission.

Just this morning, Secretary Mattis testified before Congress, saying: "I ask that you not let disagreements on domestic policy continue to hold our nation's defense hostage." He is right. We cannot let these basic issues distract us from the job that we have all, under the Constitution, taken to provide for the common defense.

I just came from a classified briefing with the Secretary, and he outlined the most important needs we must fund for our country's security. So why not come together on issues we can agree on? Six months ago, this Chamber passed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 89 to 9. In the time since, however, our military remains hamstrung under short-term measures that are standing in the way of modernization and readiness.

That is why I say to my Democratic colleagues, here is a chance for you to prove that you are serious about funding the military. Many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have already spoken clearly about their desire to support the troops.

Last month, the senior Senator from Vermont remarked:

Our military leaders agree, we cannot govern by a continuing resolution. The military cannot function under sequestration.

The senior Senator from West Virginia said:

We want our military to be funded properly so they can defend us.

The senior Senator from Montana said:

The uncertainty we have without a longer budget that goes to the end of the fiscal year is unacceptable.

The senior Senator from Connecticut said:

I hope there is bipartisan consensus among us on the Armed Services Committee and in

the Chamber as a whole that we need a strong national defense.

Even today, the minority leader told this body that Democrats "support increasing funding for our military."

So why not act? There is a consensus that we desperately need to fix the readiness issues in our Armed Forces. Why not take that step today and vote to provide the stable, predictable funding the Department of Defense so seriously needs?

When I swore an oath to defend the Constitution, I did it knowing that every day I hold this office, countless numbers of my constituents would be wearing the uniform and be in harm's way. Around the globe, you find Nebraskans, you find Americans protecting and defending the United States. Each of us here represents people who sacrifice and serve American heroes. Today is a chance to show them we have their backs because they have proven, time and time again, that they have ours.

I urge my colleagues to put aside partisan differences and take the vote to support our military and the programs that are critical to the safety and the well-being of this Nation.

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mr. President, we also have a unique opportunity today to address another program that has a deep, bipartisan well of support in the Senate. Today I visited with Nebraskans who made the trip to Washington to advocate for funding for community health centers. Across our Nation, community health centers are vital to keeping our children and our families healthy.

Last year, nearly 85,000 Nebraskans received care at centers across our State during approximately 296,000 visits. These centers provide high-quality care, compassionate care, and patient-focused care. Community health centers in my State rank second in quality measures nationally and first in four other measures involving individual care. Their focus and their impact on the communities they serve is very impressive.

We all recognize the importance of these health centers, and I was proud to recently join my colleagues in the Senate in urging that funding be reauthorized so these centers can continue to provide the quality care all Nebraskans and all Americans deserve.

Our military and community health centers are too important to be caught up in politics. As we find ourselves once again facing the prospect of yet another impasse, I urge my colleagues to join me in showing your support for these critical areas. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution makes clear what our job is: provide for the common defense and the general welfare of the United States. Let's fulfill that duty today.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KENNEDY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, a number of my colleagues will be coming to the floor this afternoon to discuss the predicament we face as the Mueller investigation—the special counsel investigation, the Department of Justice—closes in on the Trump White House and the Trump campaign, creating two problems. One is an unprecedented attack on the law enforcement institutions that are involved in that investigation, an effort to discredit our Federal Bureau of Investigation and our Department of Justice, including the suggestion that this whole thing is a witch hunt, even though every single witness, including Trump appointees who have come before our committees, has been asked “Hey, this investigation, is it a witch hunt?” and, to a person, has said no.

Russian interference was real, they are coming back in 2018, and it is no witch hunt to look into what took place.

You have this whole smear effort going on of individuals and institutions involved in the institution. You could call that the crime of omission, if you would. The crime of omission that accompanies that is, while the majority in both Houses is busy trying to smear the FBI, the Department of Justice, and various individuals in this investigation, they are not taking the steps necessary to protect the 2018 elections. We have done virtually nothing.

The one thing we have done—led by Ranking Member BEN CARDIN, the Senator from Maryland—was to get really strong sanctions put through. We all agreed on that. I think the vote was 98 to 2 in the Senate—98 to 2, powerful sanctions.

You messed in our elections. Pop. Here is one in the nose for you. Don't do it again.

That was the lesson. We are going after you, Mr. Putin, where it hurts, which is with all your dirty, corrupt oligarchs who support you and whom you pay to stay in power. That is the shot we took back. You messed in our elections; we are going after your crooked oligarchs.

Except guess where that effort stopped dead—in the Oval Office, at the President's desk, where President Trump will not let the Russia sanctions go forward. We have this whole smear campaign, discrediting honorable American institutions just to protect the President from the investigation. We have nothing being done legislatively to protect the 2018 elections, and you have the one thing we did do to send the message to the Russians that we are tired of this nonsense and to give them a little bit of a pop in the nose to get them to knock it off, a little deterrent, and the President will not act on it.

I am going to be here for the duration of this and have more to say, but I want to yield to the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who was so important in getting these sanctions through and understands very well, from his work on the Magnitsky issue, what these Russian oligarchs are up to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for bringing this issue to the attention of our colleagues and the American people. As Senator WHITEHOUSE points out, we have seen from the White House, from the President, an effort to try to undermine the credibility of the independent investigation being done by the Department of Justice under Mr. Mueller. These are very serious issues, and I hope every Member of this Chamber will support the independence of that investigation and speak loudly against any interference, wherever it may come from.

Then, Senator WHITEHOUSE has brought up the second issue; that is, Mr. Putin has been extremely active in regard to activities against U.S. interests. I appreciate Senator WHITEHOUSE referencing a report that was released on January 10 of this year. It was as a result of a full year's operation by the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to document Mr. Putin's reckless assault against democratic institutions, universal values, and the rule of law—the asymmetric arsenal he uses to accomplish that attack against democratic institutions, which includes cyber attacks, disinformation, support for fringe political groups, weaponization of energy resources, organized crime, corruption, and, yes, military aggression. He has used every one of those tools to compromise democratic institutions in Europe and, yes, in the United States.

Mr. Putin was extremely active in the 2016 election. That has now been verified without any question. A report I authored goes through 19 European countries in which Mr. Putin has been active against democratic institutions.

I share with my colleagues that the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was in town today. He is meeting with government officials. He knows firsthand Mr. Putin's aggression because there are Russian troops in Georgia today affecting its sovereignty, as there are Russian troops in Moldova, as there are Russian troops in Ukraine. The people of Montenegro saw the hand of Mr. Putin when he held a coup against their authority. The people of the United Kingdom saw Mr. Putin's efforts as he got involved in the Brexit referendum. The people of France and Germany saw Mr. Putin's aggression as he tried to interfere with their free elections.

Countries have stepped up. They said: Enough is enough. We have seen, with strong leadership, that you can counter the activities successfully of what Rus-

sia is trying to do. The right mixture of political will, of defense and deterrence can work, and, yes, as Senator WHITEHOUSE pointed out, we in Congress acted. We recognized the threat of Russia. We passed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, the CAATS Act. It was a bipartisan effort that tightened some of the sanctions under the Obama-era Executive order on Ukraine and passed new mandatory sanctions against Russia because of its activities.

There were sanctions imposed in regard to the Russian Federation's undermining cybersecurity. There were sanctions related to Russia's crude oil products. There were sanctions authorized with respect to Russian and other foreign financial institutions. There were sanctions imposed against Russia for significant corruption in the Russian Federation. There were sanctions with respect to certain transactions with foreign sanctions evaders and serious human rights abusers in the Russian Federation. There were mandatory sanctions with respect to persons who engaged in transactions with the intelligence and defense sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation.

Why? Because they were interfering in our elections.

There were sanctions with respect to investment in or in the facilitation of the privatization of state-owned assets by the Russian Federation.

Why? Because that helped finance Mr. Putin's activities.

There were sanctions with respect to the transfer of arms and related materiel to Syria.

Each one of those sanctions gave new authority to the President of the United States to impose sanctions against Russia for its activities.

I said earlier that, where countries have shown leadership, it has been effective in countering Mr. Putin's activities. With President Trump, there have been no sanctions. Not one has been brought forward under the law passed by the Congress of the United States. By 98, 99 percent, the House and Senate approved the sanctions. The Trump administration has imposed zero.

Mr. Trump has failed to acknowledge that Mr. Putin has even been engaged in our 2016 elections. He said: I talked to Mr. Putin. He seemed like he was telling me the truth when he said he wasn't involved—even though it was the unanimous view of our intelligence community and the facts had very clearly been laid out to the American people that Mr. Putin had been actively engaged in the 2016 elections.

Yes, we have seen, very recently, Russia's engagement in the Czech election. We have seen this movie before where the candidate, in his advocating for stronger ties to European institutions, is targeted by a barrage of fake news stories that spreads across online platforms, which he alleges have been directed by Russian security services

and entities tied to them—a direct assault against the Czech Republic’s democratic institutions.

As Senator WHITEHOUSE pointed out, when asked in an interview if Russia would try to influence the midterm elections of the United States, our CIA Director, Michael Pompeo, replied: “Of course. I have every expectation that they will continue to try and do that.”

So where is the Trump administration in its taking action to protect our democratic institutions?

This is not a partisan issue. There is a long tradition of Republicans and Democrats working together in Congress to counter Russian Government aggression abroad and abuse against its own citizens, our allies, and democratic institutions. The sanctions bill that passed in 2017 had near-unanimous support. It was crafted and developed by Democrats and Republicans who worked together.

The strength and durability of our political system relies on such bipartisan solutions to our national security challenges. There is a series of recommendations that were in the report I referred to earlier, those of working with our allies to develop cybersecurity issues, to working with NATO to understand what the article V response should be to cyber attacks, to finding alternative ways to stop Russia from using energy as a weapon. It starts with Presidential leadership.

We must take care to point out that there is a distinction between Mr. Putin’s corrupt regime and the people of Russia, who have been some of his most frequent and long-suffering victims. Many Russian citizens, like Sergei Magnitsky, strive for a transparent, accountable government that operates under the democratic rule of law, and we hope for better relations in the future with a Russian Government that reflects these imperatives.

In the meantime, the United States must work with our allies to build defenses against Mr. Putin’s asymmetric arsenal and strengthen our international norms and values to deter such behavior by Russia or any other country. It starts with leadership from the White House, and it starts with imposing the sanctions that were approved by Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I have been involved in a number of elections over the years. I love campaigns, and I love campaigning. I have always campaigned in a situation in which you have your opponent, and the people have a chance to make a judgment between you and your opponent as to who can best serve the people. Little did I ever think that I was going to have to fight against the Russians in a campaign. Yet that is what I fully expect, and that is what I expect a number of us who are up in November of this year will be having to do because, in the midst of all of the disinformation that we have seen that the Russians are

very good at—all of the fake accounts on Twitter and Facebook, the internet trolls, the botnets—it is critically important that the American people understand this is a fundamental attempt by Russia to influence our very democratic institutions and our critical infrastructure; and our elections, indeed, are a part of that critical infrastructure.

Last year, the intelligence community assessed that when Putin sees his attempt to influence the last election as a success, he is going to do it again. That is what the intelligence community’s conclusion was. Then, just last week, the Director of the CIA said that he had every expectation that Russia will meddle in the 2018 midterm elections.

As the Senator from Maryland just said and as the Senator from Rhode Island has already said, this is not a partisan issue. It could happen to both sides. Attempts to influence our elections are attacks on the very foundation of the democracy that we so cherish. That is really what the Russians are trying to do. They are trying to divide us, and they are trying to undermine faith in our democratic institutions. Ultimately, they are trying to undermine American leadership in the world community of nations. The bottom line is we have to do more to protect ourselves, and we have to make Mr. Putin feel enough pain to deter future attacks or else he is going to keep doing it.

Now, this Senator has the privilege of being the ranking member of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee. I must say that this Senator has sat through hearings with people who ought to know, and I have been appalled at how little we have or will have the capability of responding. It is going to take some resolve not only in this Senate, in this Congress, but in this administration, as well, to let Mr. Putin know that he is going to have pain if he continues the attacks that he has already made.

Of course, there is another aspect to this threat, which is that Russia didn’t just attack our democracy in America, as has been stated so effectively by previous speakers, but he is in Europe and in Latin America too. Look at what the Russians have done with the Spanish language propaganda television, RT. There is an RT en Espanol that has already targeted upcoming elections in Mexico and Colombia—two of our important partners in the hemisphere. The President’s National Security Adviser, General McMaster, said recently that there was already evidence of Russian meddling in Mexico.

Of course, this points to the Russian effort to destabilize the region. It has sought to gain influence through propaganda, arms sales, trade, and other means to challenge the United States in the Western Hemisphere and to undermine our partnerships, which are critical to our national security. Look at Russia’s friends Cuba and Nicaragua.

How about Venezuela?

The reality is that Russia is propping up the Maduro dictatorship in Venezuela. For years, the Maduro crowd has stolen and used the state-owned oil company Pe De Vesa to launder money, and Russia has bailed them out. Russian money has helped Maduro to avoid defaulting on debts and payments to bondholders. Meanwhile, look what is happening to the poor people of Venezuela. They are hungry, and they don’t have basic supplies. Their children are malnourished, and inflation is rampant. Maduro has undermined any remnants of Venezuela’s democracy. He jails opponents and has a corrupt Congress and cracks down on protesters. It is all part of the Russian influence campaign.

As you can see, countering Russian influence is critical for the United States and for the world. It is also important to remember that Putin can’t beat us on the ground, that he can’t beat us on the sea, and that he can’t beat us under the sea. He can’t beat us in the air, and he can’t beat us in space, but he can beat us in cyber in his propaganda campaign.

Yet Putin—that Russian bear—is not 10-feet tall. As a former Secretary of State just testified last week to our Armed Services Committee, Putin is playing a weak hand, but he is playing it very aggressively. It is time for us, the USA, to push back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here with Senator NELSON, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator CARDIN because I share their concerns about the rising chorus of partisan attacks, not only on Special Counsel Robert Mueller but also on the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice.

These attacks are part of a broader campaign that has been orchestrated by the White House to undermine the investigations into Russia’s interference in the 2016 campaign, including possible collusion by the Trump campaign. Unfortunately, if continued, it will have a lasting impact on our security structures, on our democratic institutions, and on our people. Ultimately, it will help the Kremlin achieve its goal of breaking down our country and our democratic way of life.

In a report issued in January 2017, the U.S. intelligence community found that Russia interfered in our elections. This was the unanimous conclusion of all 17 U.S. intelligence agencies. Indeed, that Russian interference continues to this day, not only in the domestic affairs of the United States but in the affairs of our Western allies. We have seen the Kremlin’s hand in Great Britain, in Spain, in France, and in Mexico—all in an effort to determine the outcome and to disrupt elections in those countries.

Just last week, in an interview with the BBC, CIA Director Mike Pompeo

confirmed Russia's ongoing interference. As Senator CARDIN said, when Director Pompeo was asked if Russia would try to influence our midterm elections this year, he replied: "Of course. I have every expectation that they will continue to try and do that."

In fact, in recent weeks, Russian internet trolls and bots have used Facebook and Twitter to aggressively promote the release of the House Republicans' memo, by DEVIN NUNES, that attacks the integrity of the FBI. Let's think about that. Russia gave a powerful assist to the successful campaign to release a misleading document, undermining an ongoing FBI investigation.

Despite these disturbing facts, President Trump continues to be dismissive of claims of any Russian interference. For 6 months, Congress has expected the administration to impose the penalties in the bipartisan Russia sanctions bill that passed 98 to 2, but the administration has not even issued one sanction through that law. Despite ongoing brazen Russian interference, the White House claims that sanctions are not needed because the threat of sanctions is already "serving as a deterrent." The mere threat of sanctions clearly is not serving as a deterrent. Our national security agencies, NATO systems, and even the Senate have experienced countless cyber attacks since the 2016 elections. Yet Vladimir Putin continues to deny that Russia interferes in anything at all, and for support, Putin can point to President Trump's own denials of Russian interference.

President Trump has a penchant for labeling factual reports as "fake news." Again and again, he says things that are obviously false or misleading. He calls responsible mainstream journalists "the enemy of the people." He attacks the rule of law, the judiciary, and our law enforcement agencies. These are all classic hallmarks of the slippery slope toward authoritarianism. Indeed, it is striking how attacks by some Republicans on law enforcement and democratic institutions echo similar attacks by the Kremlin and its mouthpieces.

Consider these side-by-side comparisons of statements by Russian officials and statements by Republicans.

As we see in this tweet, which is dated January 2, 2018, President Trump has described U.S. Government employees and the Justice Department as the "Deep State." At the same time Russia's propaganda network, RT, has repeated this terminology. So we see this: "Deep State takedown." Just yesterday, RT aired a discussion on how to root out the "Deep State" now that its biases supposedly have been exposed by the "Nunes memo."

Again, we see these mirrored messages between Republicans, the White House, and Putin. As we see in this panel, allegations that Special Counsel Mueller and the FBI are conducting a "witch hunt" are coming from the highest levels of both the American

and Russian Governments. We see that Reuters has repeated a line from RIA, which is Russia's state television, saying: "U.S. scandal over Russian contacts is 'a witch hunt.'" That sentiment was repeated by ANDY BIGGS, a Republican who is calling on Mr. Mueller to "end the witch hunt," and, of course, it was tweeted by Donald Trump, who called all of the illegal leaks of classified and other information a "total witch hunt."

In panel 3, we see that both Putin and President Trump claim that there is no way to know for sure who meddled in the U.S. election. You can see the two of them. They blame Democrats for allegations of Russian meddling. Putin said that "maybe someone lying in bed" was responsible. Looking at similar language, President Trump famously said: "It could be someone sitting on their bed that weighs 400 pounds."

It is unfortunate that some Republicans, as well as voices in the conservative media, appear to believe that, in order to support the President, they must attack and discredit not only Special Counsel Mueller but also the Department of Justice and the FBI. These partisan attacks are baseless and reckless.

They will not succeed in deflecting law enforcement from its duties and mission. What they may do is that they may well succeed in undermining the American people's faith and confidence in these institutions so vital to a healthy democracy. That is not only unfortunate, but it is shameful.

Last summer Members of Congress came together on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to impose sanctions on Russia because people here believed they were interfering in our elections. Republicans and Democrats spoke with one voice. We said: Our country has been attacked by a hostile power. We will not tolerate it, and we will stand together to stop it. Today, it is critical that we continue to speak with one voice in condemning Russia's interference.

This is a really remarkable moment in our country's history. A hostile foreign power has interfered in our Presidential election, and it continues to interfere. CIA Director Pompeo said, in no uncertain terms, that Russia will interfere in this year's midterm elections. Our law enforcement agencies and a special counsel are working diligently to undercover the scope and methods of Russia's interference so we can put a stop to it. Supporting these efforts is not about party and not about partisanship. It is about patriotism. It is about defending America's democracy, which has been attacked and continues to be vulnerable to attack.

Make no mistake. Our democracy is being tested, our law enforcement agencies are being tested, and we, as Senators, are being tested. We have a responsibility to come together—Senators of both parties—to defend the

independence of the Justice Department and the FBI. We must insist that Special Counsel Mueller be allowed to conduct and complete his investigation without further political interference. We must stand together in opposing Russia's outrageous continuing interference in America's elections and domestic affairs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish to commend my colleagues who are sounding the alarm about Russia's interference in U.S. elections and who have worked tirelessly for months on their respective committees to get the answers that Americans deserve and give the confidence Americans need to know that their government is committed to preventing such interference from ever happening again.

This work is incredibly important to people around the country and in my home State of Washington. I have heard from countless people who deeply love this country but fear for its institutions, and they are concerned about the integrity of elections.

Here are the facts. More than a year ago, U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that Russia interfered in the last Presidential election, calling Russia's meddling a "significant escalation in directness, level of activity, and scope of effort" compared to previous attempts.

That is not my opinion. It is not a partisan statement. It is a fact. Even more troubling, they are already back at it. We know this because our President's own handpicked CIA Director said last week that, "of course," Russia is trying to meddle in this year's midterm elections.

That is exactly why this Congress approved sanctions months ago in order to punish Russia and show them the steep price of doing this again. If there is one issue that we should all be able to agree on, it is that no one should get away with such a devious attack on our democracy. But, somehow, while the public is demanding action, the White House has gone silent, refusing to implement sanctions for reasons President Trump can't or will not explain.

This same President, who has no problems speaking or tweeting on any other topic under the sun, clams up when it comes to Russia or he tries to change the subject or he launches a political attack. This same President, who promised to put "America first," has failed to live up to the most basic duty of defending our elections and enforcing congressional actions to punish Russian meddling.

The same President who promised law and order has been lashing out against a special counsel investigation, with a campaign to discredit our agencies of law and order by criticizing the men and women of our Nation's top law enforcement agencies, firing or threatening to fire those who stand up to him, and sowing doubt about the media that dares to report the facts.

Let's remember that the Putin regime that President Trump is so fond of is one that has invaded and annexed part of Ukraine and continues to incite war in Ukraine, is propping up the murderous Assad regime and is every bit as responsible for those heinous acts as Assad himself, and constantly tries to instigate conflict by threatening our troops around the world.

Perhaps the most disappointing piece of this is that President Trump is now not acting alone. He gets help from Members of Congress who join in partisan attacks on the FBI and Department of Justice. Just think about that. We have a President and Members of the Republican Party who are more interested in helping a foreign power get away with interfering in our elections than allowing an investigation to run its course.

It is simply stunning how far some of my Republican colleagues would go to undermine the special counsel and congressional investigations in order to score political points. This doesn't just put them at odds with the public in the short term. This has long-term consequences for the men and women who protect our country from harm. A few days ago, a former supervisory special agent with the FBI who served as a counterterrorism investigator and special assistant to the Bureau's Director explained why he was now resigning from the FBI in order to speak publicly.

He said his resignation was painful but "the alternative of remaining quiet while the bureau is tarnished for political gain is impossible." He said he worries that the damage from attacks on the integrity of the FBI could last generations.

There are a number of things this Congress must commit to. First of all, we must ensure that Special Counsel Robert Mueller stays on the job and continues to follow the facts wherever they may lead, without threat or intimidation and with the resources he needs. We already know the President talked about firing Mr. Mueller last year. Well, the President should be on notice: Firing Mueller is not an option, and the same goes for trying to fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

I also want to be clear. Doling out a Presidential pardon to try to cover up any collusion or obstruction of justice is unacceptable and will be met with furious resistance across the country.

This is about our elections, our national security, and it is about our standing in the world. No one—no one—should stand in the way of a thorough investigation. In the coming days, weeks, and months, Congress must work to fulfill its duty to the American people by ensuring the integrity of our elections and safeguarding investigations by allowing them to run their course free from political pressure.

The question is whether the Trump administration and all Members of

Congress will choose to act in the best interests of our country and our democracy or whether they will continue to act out of self-preservation and shortsighted political gain. The world is watching.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to denounce—this is a strong word but an appropriate word—the Republican effort to undermine America's faith in important institutions—all to protect Donald Trump from the Russia investigation.

This effort is self-evident to any neutral observer watching "Fox and Friends," reading the "Drudge Report," or following the President on Twitter, and it has profound consequences for our country.

Defending our critical institutions, such as the FBI and an independent Department of Justice, should not be a partisan issue, and those who care about these institutions have to speak up. This, of course, includes Members of Congress.

Many congressional Republicans, however, appear determined to transform legitimate congressional oversight into an arm of the President's defense. For example, the Teapot Dome hearings uncovered government corruption for personal gain. The Kefauver committee uncovered organized crime and corruption nationwide. The Watergate committee uncovered Nixon's conspiracy. The Church committee led to landmark reforms of the intelligence community, some of the very reforms that are currently being warped for Trump's benefit. These were bipartisan, fact-based, public inquiries into issues of national consequence.

The investigation into Russia's acknowledged interference in our election should be no different. Unfortunately, many of the Republicans in Congress investigating the Trump-Russia matter appear more concerned about protecting the President than getting at the truth. This is particularly so in the House of Representatives, where almost nothing happens on the Intelligence Committee without the assent of the White House. But it is also true in the Senate, where even the Judiciary Committee has been stymied in its efforts to get to the truth.

Certainly, it is not from a lack of trying. Democrats serving on relevant committees have demonstrated determination in fulfilling our constitutional oversight obligations, but this is nearly impossible without cooperation from the Republican majority. Without cooperation from Republicans, letters requesting information are not bipartisan, and interviews of key witnesses are delayed or are canceled, just to give two examples.

Conducting oversight behind closed doors and out of the public view lacks transparency, of course, and creates a situation ripe for exploitation. It allows Republicans to weaponize incom-

plete or inaccurate information for the President's benefit.

We have seen the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, DEVIN NUNES, use this tactic last week, in spite of concerns raised by the FBI and the Department of Justice. Congressman NUNES, determined to support the President's paranoid conclusion that the entire national security apparatus is out to get him, created a memo that misconstrued critical intelligence to engineer an outcome that pleased the White House. Armed with a misleading and inaccurate memo, Congressman NUNES and Republicans across the country, with the assistance of Russia bots on social media, launched a concerted attack on the FBI, the intelligence community, and the Justice Department. Why? To prove a conspiracy against the President that does not exist.

NUNES and other Republicans knew the facts did not support their conspiracy theory, but the incitement continued anyway, even singling out for attack the President's own handpicked Director of the FBI after his agency opposed releasing the memo. By the time the committee released it and the public learned just how false and misleading it was, Congressman NUNES and his memo had already sowed the seeds of doubt about the FBI and its investigation.

The President rewarded Congressman NUNES yesterday by tweeting:

DEVIN NUNES, a man of tremendous courage and grit, may someday be recognized as a Great American Hero for what he has exposed and what he has had to endure!

I think history will conclude otherwise.

Just as the President has praised the NUNES attacks on the FBI and the Justice Department, he has certainly been doing his part to undermine these institutions. He has done his part by demeaning and humiliating the very people he appointed to run these institutions. We can all recall the very personal attacks on Attorney General Jeff Sessions in the Oval Office, demands for personal loyalty from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, and assertions that the FBI was "in tatters" under the leadership of his handpicked Director, Christopher Wray. We can all appreciate the irony of Donald Trump's personal attacks against Special Counsel Robert Mueller, whom the President interviewed and seriously considered for a return to his old job as Director of the FBI.

The self-serving and personal attacks against people who refuse to do his bidding reflect the narcissism of a man who has little regard for his responsibilities as President. Sadly, for President Trump, it is all about him every time, all the time.

By attacking the Justice Department and the FBI, the President is attempting to discredit the Russia investigation and protect himself and his family. His words and actions are intended to undermine public confidence in the

FBI and the Justice Department for his benefit in the here and now. He does not seem to care about the long-term consequences of eroding public confidence in two critical institutions charged with keeping us safe and protecting our rights.

Through all the obfuscation and negative personal attacks, a clear pattern has emerged. The President and his Republican allies will do whatever they can to discredit the Mueller Russia investigation without regard or respect for the collateral damage caused. Then they will turn to FOX News and other outlets to get their message or propaganda out to their base and dismiss the mainstream media as fake news. Sadly, for our country, it is a strategy that can win and that can work.

According to a new poll from Reuters, 73 percent of Republicans believe that the Justice Department and the FBI are trying to undermine the President. This state of affairs may serve the President's short-term interests, but it will have real and lasting negative consequences for our country in the years and decades to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Hawaii for a very eloquent statement. I so appreciate her leadership and miss her on the Intelligence Committee. I also want to express my appreciation to the organizers of this effort—Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator BLUMENTHAL—who have been tenacious in pursuing these issues. Both of them serve on the Judiciary Committee, and I serve on the Intelligence Committee.

It is quite obvious what has been going on in the last few weeks. The President, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, and others are working hard to get the American people just to forget that our country is in the middle of an ongoing national security crisis. Russia has attacked our democracy; Russia has intervened in our election; and there is every reason to believe that they are just going to keep doing it.

In the year since the assessment I mentioned was conducted by the intelligence community, virtually everyone has come to see it this way. Donald Trump obviously disagrees. The only change has been the extent to which Donald Trump's protectors are willing to go out and throw dust in the air to prevent America from focusing on this direct threat to the people of this country and our very system of government.

Congress has to get to the bottom of what has been done to our democracy, but the fact is, the Senate has been stonewalled, particularly when it comes to the crucial issues of following the money. It began when Donald Trump refused to do what every other Presidential candidate has done now for four decades; that is, release his tax returns. It continues on other fronts. I

have repeatedly asked the Secretary of the Treasury to provide the Senate Finance Committee with Treasury Department documents that would allow investigators to follow the money between Russia, Donald Trump, and his associates. The committee has been given nothing. Secretary Mnuchin has simply refused to cooperate with congressional oversight conducted by members of the committee that has direct jurisdiction over his agency.

So the question is, Mr. President, what are you hiding? What is in those tax returns and those financial documents that you don't want revealed? What would be so damaging?

It seems to me that if you are to understand Russia's ability to undermine our democracy, it is essential to follow the money. Donald Trump's family has acknowledged its financial ties to Russia. In fact, in 2008 and 2009, when it was pretty hard to get money for investment, the Trump family said—their words, not mine: Much of our portfolio comes from the Russians.

The special counsel included extensive information on money laundering and tax evasion in his recent indictment of Paul Manafort. There have been dozens and dozens of press stories—it seems there are several every week—about the finances of the President and his associates that warrant real congressional oversight.

Americans are alarmed by the administration's stonewalling, and millions have been appalled by the idea that this would somehow be treated like just another political game. Those who abuse the classification system to put out a laughable partisan memo that doesn't stand up to scrutiny apparently are willing to do it just to protect the President at any cost.

The cost is our national security. The cost is our democracy. No matter how much the President and his protectors in Congress try to change the subject, we are not, on the floor of this Senate, going to lose sight of what is really at stake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to follow my colleagues here today and to be followed by my great friend and colleague, Senator WHITEHOUSE, who has been a wonderful partner in this effort and has helped organize today's colloquy. I will yield to him shortly.

I think the American people are asking a commonsense question: What is the President trying to hide? What do the Russians have on Donald Trump?

The intelligence community unanimously says that the Russians attacked our democracy by interfering in the 2016 election. The only one who has any doubt about it—in fact, the only public official who has the temerity to deny it—is the President of the United States. So the question is, Why?

That is the elephant in this Chamber. That is the question that the American

people demand that we answer in our investigation into obstruction of justice through the Judiciary Committee and that the special counsel will be answering in his investigation into collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign, as well as subsequent obstruction of justice.

Some of this investigation involves past events and actions by the President and others. But, in fact, what is happening daily in real time is evidence of obstruction of justice. It is as though we were watching a case in court unfolding before our eyes. All we lack is the marshalling of the evidence and the closing argument. In a subsequent speech, I intend to go into great detail on that obstruction case.

From what we know now through the public record, there is a lot more that the special counsel knows from his investigation, and he will be making use of it from classified and unclassified sources.

We now know, irrefutably and undeniably, that there is a credible case of obstruction of justice against the President of the United States. It is credible and, in many ways, powerful and compelling.

In fact, President Trump has endeavored mightily to stop all of these investigations into the Russian meddling in the 2016 election and his connections to it.

Obstruction of justice is a serious crime, essentially consisting of two elements: No. 1, to interfere with a lawful investigation and, No. 2, that interference has to be done with corrupt intent. Corrupt intent means any improper purpose.

It doesn't matter that the President, for example, had the right to fire Jim Comey or to say one thing or another. The question is why he did it. There can be circumstantial evidence of that corrupt intent in what he says and does, as well as direct quotations.

If it was to stop or influence an investigation, that is corrupt intent, and that is enough for obstruction of justice.

My colleagues and I are here today to raise the alarm because where we are now is that part of the President's corrupt intent, as well as his interference with the investigation, consists of an all-out assault on law enforcement and the intelligence community.

In some ways, it is a standard means of defense at trial: When all else fails, attack the prosecution. I have seen it and experienced it as a U.S. attorney myself in court. So I know it is a last resort, but it has lasting implications for the defendant, or whoever is raising this defense—in this case, the President of the United States. It has huge, sweeping, enduring, horrific, and reprehensible ramifications. It is irresponsible in a profound constitutional sense for the Commander in Chief to be undermining our national security by attacking the FBI and our intelligence community as institutions.

I wish to remind my colleagues of what our colleague JOHN MCCAIN said.



My colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE prepared this poster board and will be using it shortly. He said: "The latest attacks against the FBI and Department of Justice serve no American interests—no party's, no President's, only Putin's." These attacks serve the Russians. They do not serve America's national security because they are done with the purpose to obstruct justice.

They are the latest in a series of irresponsible and reprehensible actions that began in the first days of this administration. In January 2017, Acting Attorney General Sally Yates went to the White House to inform White House Counsel Don McGahn that Michael Flynn had lied to the Vice President about his relationship with the Russians and he could, therefore, be subject to blackmail. Don McGahn immediately briefed President Trump, but the White House failed to react in the way that a responsible President would. Soon after it was revealed that the FBI was doing an investigation into Russian meddling, Trump asked FBI Director James Comey for his loyalty. In effect, he asked for a loyalty pledge from the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. He cornered Comey privately and said that he hoped Comey would let Flynn go, referring to the FBI's investigation into Michael Flynn.

Trump called Comey and told him he wanted him to lift the cloud of the Russian investigation over his Presidency. He then called for the firing of Andrew McCabe, a potential corroborating witness for Comey's conversations with Trump.

He asked Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and CIA Director Mike Pompeo and Mike Rogers to publicly state that he was not under investigation. When Comey refused to bend to this pressure, he fired Comey and misstated the reason for that firing. He lied about it, claiming it was because of Comey's supposed handling of the Clinton email investigation, although he later admitted in an interview with NBC News anchor Lester Holt that the firing was "because of this Russia thing," and he bragged to Russian officials at the White House that Comey's firing had "taken off" the "great pressure" of the Russia investigation.

But that did not make the Russia investigation go away, because of the appointment of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. He berated his Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, for recusing himself from the special counsel's investigation because he knew Sessions could have stopped it. He berated Jeff Sessions and privately ranted about it.

Those private rants, along with other private conversations—many of them now known to the special counsel, no doubt—are evidence that will be produced by the special counsel.

We know that President Trump wrote a deliberately deceptive statement for his son Donald Trump, Jr., to cover up the Trump Tower meeting and

to misstate what the purpose of that meeting was—supposedly Russian adoptions, when, in fact, it was to obtain dirt on Hillary Clinton. He did it when he knew he was under investigation. That is the key point.

He ordered the firing of Robert Mueller and backed down only when his White House Counsel said he would resign. Again, the reasons that he provided, much like the Comey letter that was a lie, the reasons for his firing the FBI Director were pretextual. He lied about why he wanted Mueller gone, just as he had lied about why he fired Jim Comey.

In some ways, others are tasked now, in a switch of tactics. He has no longer threatened to fire the special counsel—at least publicly—but he has tasked his surrogates and sycophants in Congress to attack institutions like the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the intelligence community, along with him. That was the purpose of the Nunes memo—to discredit the FBI and distract from the investigation.

But if he orchestrated the writing of that memo, if he participated in drafting it, if anyone in the White House, with his imprimatur or direction, was involved in crafting that memo, that is evidence also of obstruction of justice, and it will come home to haunt DEVIN NUNES and the White House staff who participated and others in the Congress who may have been involved, including the staff—all of it because he wants to stop the investigation, all of it because he is afraid of something that the special counsel has and that the Russians may have on him.

The fact of the matter is that no one is above the law. If the President refuses to talk to the special counsel, he should be subpoenaed to appear before the grand jury. If he fails to voluntarily appear for that interview with Robert Mueller or his staff, he should be subpoenaed before the grand jury, and he should be forced to testify under threat of contempt. And if he invokes Executive privilege, the outcome will be the same when it is tested in court, as it was in *United States v. Nixon*.

We have seen this movie before. We know how it ends because a broad claim of Executive privilege fails in the face of a lawful need for evidence in an ongoing criminal investigation.

If he claims a Fifth Amendment privilege—the right against self-incrimination—it will be a powerful testimony to what he fears the special counsel and the Russians have on him.

We are careening toward a constitutional crisis, and that is why my colleagues in this Chamber can no longer remain silent. It is why Paul Ryan can no longer tolerate DEVIN NUNES to continue with these frantic antics to protect the President and his ongoing acts of obstruction. It is why I hope we will adopt legislation to protect the special counsel, sending a message to the President of the United States that he cannot obstruct justice by firing the special counsel and precipitate a con-

frontation that would match the Saturday Night Massacre during the era of Watergate. That would throw this country into another constitutional conflagration that would be profoundly damaging and enduringly harmful.

This investigation is no hoax or witch hunt. It is real. It is not about any of us or any of the President's tweets. It is about evidence and law. It is about facts and statutes. It is about the elements of a crime that is under investigation. The American people deserve to know the truth, which is why we must have public hearings in the Judiciary Committee, and we must have subpoenas for documents and witnesses. It is why we need to move in the Judiciary Committee with special counsel legislation that will offer protections that guarantee the American people that they will know the truth and that the rule of law will be protected. No one is above the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank my friend and colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, on January 6, 2017, the U.S. intelligence community released a shocking report.

It stated: "We assess with high confidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016, aimed at the U.S. presidential election, the consistent goals of which were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency."

This wasn't just one intelligence agency, it was a unanimous conclusion of the entire intelligence community.

It sent shockwaves throughout our entire government. This isn't about Republicans versus Democrats, it is about a foreign President ordering an attack on our democracy.

President Putin's goal was clear: to sow division and discord and to undermine public faith in our democratic processes and the rule of law.

Almost immediately we saw concerns and calls for action from both sides of the aisle.

Bipartisan congressional investigations were initiated to figure out exactly what happened and how to prevent it from happening again.

However, despite this promising beginning, the commitment to uncover the facts and protect our country from outside attacks has devolved into an inside attack on our own democratic institutions.

Sadly, rather than serving as a unifying force, President Trump has done all he can to undermine the intelligence community's assessment.

What is worse, he has utterly failed to take strong actions against Russia—and in some cases has rewarded Russia by changing U.S. policy.

Instead of supporting a robust and independent investigation into what Russia did and who was involved, the President instead is working to halt the investigations altogether.

Unfortunately, the President hasn't been alone in these efforts.

Last week, Congressman DEVIN NUNES, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, pushed for the declassification of a transparently political memo written by his staff.

Here are some things we know about the memo and the process to release it: We know that the memo confirms the FBI's Russia investigation was not triggered by the dossier or by Carter Page.

In fact, the investigation started because another Trump campaign foreign policy adviser, George Papadopolous, was told in April that Russia had "dirt" on Clinton in the form of thousands of emails.

We also know that, while Carter Page was not the reason the Russia investigation started, the government had a reasonable belief that Page was acting as an agent of a foreign power.

We know that Congressman NUNES did not review the underlying classified documents himself.

These documents include the FISA warrant renewal applications, which must show what the government was learning about Carter Page.

Instead of reviewing these documents himself, the chairman relied solely on his staff, who may or may not have been coordinating this campaign with the White House. We don't know because Congressman NUNES refuses to answer that question.

We know that Chairman NUNES refused to allow the Department of Justice and FBI to brief all Members on the underlying documents before and after the memo's release.

We know that Congressman NUNES refused to allow Democrats to issue their own analysis of the classified documents along with his memo.

And we know that Russian social media bots assisted in the efforts to influence American public opinion concerning the memo.

The drafting and release of this partisan, misleading memo was particularly disturbing to me.

As Senator McCAIN stated last week, "If we continue to undermine our own rule of law, we are doing Putin's job for him."

Intelligence and law enforcement oversight should never be used as a political weapon.

I have served on the Senate Intelligence Committee for 17 years, and I can't recall a single instance when an intelligence report was handled in this manner or a situation where additional views were actively blocked from being released.

This has been true even with the most controversial issues like the Intelligence Committee's investigation of the Benghazi attacks or the report on the CIA's use of torture.

In both of these instances, the committee held bipartisan meetings and shared drafts of report language between the majority and minority.

For the torture report, the CIA was offered and accepted opportunities to

respond and request changes. The committee revised its report where appropriate and even cited disagreements in footnotes.

Once public, the committee included additional views from Republicans on the committee. The CIA's response was made public. There was a very thorough declassification process to ensure the summary was safe to release.

In fact, even though the final report was completed in 2012, the executive summary wasn't made public until December 2014 in order to ensure the process was properly followed.

There were disagreements, but the minority party was not cut out of the process.

That is not how the Senate works, that is not how democracy works, and it is not how any congressional committee or investigation should operate.

What I have described so far was the process and political implications of the Nunes memo, but it is just one part of an extensive pattern of abuse of power.

What we are seeing is a sustained, coordinated effort to diminish, weaken, and destabilize our top law enforcement officials, and we all should take exception to that.

Both the rushed manner and the disputed contents of the Nunes memo are a case in point.

After the memo was released on Friday, House Intelligence Committee Ranking Member ADAM SCHIFF hit the nail on the head.

He called the public release of misleading allegations against the FBI and the Justice Department "a shameful effort to discredit these institutions, undermine the Special Counsel's ongoing investigation, and undercut congressional probes."

He is absolutely right.

And this is just the latest in a long pattern of attempts to undercut the FBI and Justice Department.

Some of the efforts were blatant.

After FBI Director Comey refused to pledge his loyalty to the President, the President fired him, an action the President himself admitted was tied to the Russia investigation.

The President has engaged in a series of tweets attacking the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General and Deputy Director of the FBI, among others.

There have also been media reports that the President has considered firing both Robert Mueller and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein, but many of the efforts by the President and his team weren't quite as obvious.

We have seen multiple reports that the President demanded personal loyalty from top law enforcement officials including Comey and Rosenstein.

In fact, President Trump frequently calls the Attorney General "his" Attorney General and refers to "my FBI" and "my Department of Justice." In fact, they aren't his, they are American people's.

Media reports also say that President instructed White House Counsel Don

McGahn to keep the Attorney General from recusing himself from the Russia investigation.

Two heads of intelligence agencies, DNI Director Dan Coats and NSC Director Michael Rogers, said they felt pressure from the President to say there was no collusion with Russia.

And it has become apparent that many of the actions taken by the White House, Congressman NUNES, and others have been coordinated with conservative media like FOX News.

Objectivity and nonpartisanship are core components of the FBI and the Justice Department. To either attempt to co-opt them or punish them for not kowtowing to the President's political whims is egregious.

Our Founding Fathers placed enormous trust in the legislative branch to serve as an effective check on the President, and it is time to do our job.

Congress needs to work alongside Special Counsel Mueller to get answers for the American people.

The Nation deserves to understand exactly what happened and who was involved, and all of us need to believe the President isn't above the law and will not be allowed to abuse his position for personal gain.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, indisputably, Vladimir Putin conducted a broadly based attack on American democracy and its most important institutions. Tragically, Putin's broadly based attack on American democracy and our institutions is echoed by President Trump's attack on American democracy and our most important institutions. And tragically or pathetically—I don't know which to say—that attack is echoed by a broad Republican attack on American democracy and institutions.

We can and should take steps to defend our American democracy. They are not terribly complicated.

No. 1, stop attacking our own institutions. We can start there. We are doing Putin's work when we attack our own institutions.

No. 2, step up to protect our own elections. All of our national security witnesses have warned that they are coming after us in 2018 with more election interference. Yet what have we done?

No. 3, stop sheltering Putin and his oligarchs from consequences. We passed sanctions against Russian oligarchs and Putin and Russia for this very thing—messing around in our elections—through the Senate 98 to 2. The effective date of them has run. Yet the President won't enforce them. Stop sheltering Putin and his oligarchs.

No. 4, clean up the dark channels of foreign influence and corruption. We know what they are because we have seen this play out in European countries and former Soviet Union countries. We know how it works. We have similar vulnerabilities. Fix them.

Those are four things that are not hard to do.

A fifth would be serious investigations by Congress—not tiptoe investigations but ones where we take hard looks, ask hard questions, and demand hard evidence.

No one in the Senate has tangled more with Vladimir Putin than our friend JOHN MCCAIN. Senator MCCAIN has tangled with him so often that he has actually been blacklisted from travel to Russia. What Senator MCCAIN said last week is something we should take to heart: “The latest attacks against the FBI and Department of Justice serve no American interests—no party’s, no President’s, only Vladimir Putin’s.”

He also said this: “Our Nation’s elected officials, including the President, must stop looking at this investigation through the lens of politics and manufacturing political sideshows.” Instead, we need to be looking at the situation through the lens of our national security.

Here is what America’s national security professionals tell us. First, they concluded: “Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election.”

I will continue. “Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. Democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.”

They concluded: “We further assess Putin and the Russian government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.”

We went on with this important conclusion in the January 2017 intelligence community assessment: “We assess Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes.”

We know they are coming. We have been warned by Trump’s own appointees that they are coming. Yet we do nothing. Nada. As Putin would say, “*nichego*.”

Well, right now that leaves Congress complicit, but it doesn’t have to be this way, and it ought not be this way. It is not too late to defend our democracy and to teach Russia and the world some different lessons about who we are. What are the things we could do? Well, we could defend our democracy from Russian political influence.

Let’s take legislative action to secure election infrastructure, improve our cyber security, counter and blunt Russian propaganda, and keep foreign money out of our politics. That ought not to be too hard to ask.

Let’s defend our democracy from future Russian and foreign meddling. Let’s insist on the implementation and enforcement of the sanctions against Russia. We passed them 98 to 2 for a reason. Why is President Trump sheltering Putin and the oligarchs from that punch? Let’s insist on the message being delivered that we don’t tolerate

this behavior and that we will deter it with serious sanctions.

Let’s insist on transparency. Let’s insist on transparency about foreign financial interference in our country, through shell corporations in particular, and let’s insist on transparency about the President’s foreign financial dealings and conflicts of interest.

Finally, let’s pass legislation to protect the special counsel from interference and obstruction. I have been a U.S. attorney. I understand the role of an independent and honorable Department of Justice. I understand, as we all should, that no man—not even the President—is above the law. And like many colleagues who have served in the Department of Justice, I expect, as they all expect, that even under the pressure, the threats, and the intimidation brought by the President against this Department of Justice, it will do its job. As FBI Director Christopher Wray recently said, “We expect them to keep calm and tackle hard.”

I see the majority leader is on the floor.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The majority leader.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I was unavoidably absent due to a family medical emergency for rollcall vote No. 28. Had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

#### CONFIRMATION OF DAVID RYAN STRAS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my disappointment that David Stras was confirmed to serve on the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. Stras’s nomination should not have made it to the Senate floor. For over a century, the Senate Judiciary Committee has used the blue slip process to ensure that the White House fulfills its constitutional duty to seek the Senate’s advice and consent for judicial nominations. Traditionally, a nominee received a committee hearing only if both of their home State Senators returned their blue slips to the committee. Despite receiving only one blue slip, Mr. Stras was granted a hearing, and his nomination was sent to the

Senate floor for a vote. I am extremely disappointed that my colleagues are abandoning long-standing practices in order to fill the judiciary with conservative ideologues.

Moreover, Mr. Stras is yet another judicial nominee selected for this administration by the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society. His name was on President Trump’s Supreme Court shortlist, and although he was not selected to fill the Supreme Court vacancy, outside dark money PACS spent millions of dollars running ads in support of his nomination to this seat. These facts should alarm every American. Our judiciary system, under the Trump administration, is being outsourced to outside organizations with unlimited financial resources that are not accountable to voters.

I urge my colleagues to return to regular order.

#### OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to speak in opposition to President Trump’s proposal to open all offshore waters in the country to oil drilling.

This proposal has been met with outrage from every corner, as my colleagues are making clear here on the Senate floor today.

I would like to take a minute to remind everyone of what is at stake.

Before the Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez spills, Santa Barbara, CA, experienced the worst oil spill in U.S. history.

In 1969, an offshore oil rig in Federal waters spilled more than 3 million gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean.

The environmental disaster killed thousands of marine mammals and birds. Our local beaches were coated by a thick layer of oil. Tourists were turned away, and commercial fishing operations were shut down, hurting the local economy.

After that spill, California decided that enough was enough. State agencies blocked all new offshore oil drilling in State waters up to 3 miles from the shore. The State reinforced this ban with the California Coastal Sanctuary Act in 1994.

Through a combination of local ordinances, congressional opposition, and moratoria imposed by Presidents from both parties, our State has also fought off any new drilling in Federal waters beyond 3 miles from the shore since 1984.

The Trump administration has now proposed undoing our progress by opening all Federal waters, including the waters off California’s coast, to new gas and oil drilling.

If his proposal is allowed to go through, it would lead to the first new offshore oil drilling leases sold in the Pacific Ocean in more than 30 years.

So far, an exception has been made for Florida, hastily announced by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in response