

the country that has, in many instances, been lacking or woefully inadequate.

But the bottom line is that rural America needs income. We can do lots of things to improve the quality of life in rural America, but in the absence of farmer success, in the absence of a farmer and rancher earning a living, the ability to attract our children or others to come back to the farm and the ability to retain our young people in the community to work on a farm diminishes greatly.

One of the questions I received was from a young lady studying in Texas, and this was her question: What are you doing to make certain that young people have a chance to be farmers? While my answer was less than perfect—it is a hard one to answer—it is an important question. The reality is that the chances of young people having the opportunity in agriculture to earn a living is totally dependent upon the economic success of those individuals in agriculture today and what the future holds. We can find a few programs that might encourage young people to be able to enter agriculture as a profession and as a career, but the reality is that it will only work when they are earning a good living, and that comes, once again, from the safety nets, including crop insurance, which will be included in a farm bill as it works its way through Congress this year, but also in the opportunity to see that every market around the globe is available to the U.S. farmer and rancher so that he and she will earn a living and so that they will increase the chances that their sons and daughters have the opportunity to work side by side with them into the future.

I especially want to thank a few people from the American Farm Bureau Federation for allowing me to attend and inviting me to attend and to speak—certainly, President Zippy Duvall, the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, from Georgia; Dale Moore, a Kansan who is at the American Farm Bureau Federation; and Mary Kay Thatcher, their long-time government affairs person. All of those individuals at the American Farm Bureau Federation do their job so well, but I especially want to acknowledge the friendship and support of those three individuals.

I am reminded that no matter where we go, farmers and ranchers have a lot in common. In addition to their economic importance to communities across Kansas and around rural America, it is farmers and ranchers that still today provide a sense of what is right in America—an understanding of right and wrong, an understanding of the value of life, integrity, character, and values. It is something that is important not just to rural America but to our entire United States of America. So thank you to the farmers who visited with me. Thank you to the farmers who gave me the opportunity to speak with them and listened to me.

Please know that I am happy and will continue to roll up my sleeves to work with my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats—the Senator from Kansas, the chairman of the Ag Committee; and the Senator from Michigan, the ranking member, Ms. STABENOW. Let's get a good farm bill done. Let's get it done on time, and let's all work together to make sure economic activity is alive and well and trade flourishes between the United States and the rest of the world.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill 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.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I believe that my distinguished colleague and friend, Senator BLUMENTHAL, will be joining me on the floor. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for such time as I may require and, at the conclusion of my remarks, that Senator BLUMENTHAL be recognized to make his remarks on the same subject.

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

SAFEGUARDING OUR ELECTIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, 2018 is going to be an election year. In just 10 months, Americans will go to the polls to exercise their franchise, believing in the integrity of our democratic process. I am here today to discuss a threat to the integrity of that process, which is getting little attention here in Congress—nothing near what it deserves. We really ought to be acting with some expedition to safeguard our elections this November. Yet, instead, the effort is one of chasing down partisan investigative rabbit holes.

What ought to be our job? Well, national security, intelligence, election, and law enforcement officials, many of them testifying before us here in Congress, have made what our job is very clear. We must counter Russia's well-established election interference playbook. Russia will hack. Russia will bully. Russia will propagandize. Perhaps more insidiously, Russia will seek to corrupt, particularly by exploiting cracks in our incorporation and campaign finance laws. We are warned: Russia will seek to interfere in 2018's election.

I ask unanimous consent that an article entitled "CIA's Pompeo says Russia and others trying to undermine U.S. elections" be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

To quote the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Heather Conley, testifying before Congress last spring, corruption is the "lubricant" for Mos-

cow's election interference, so "the battle of Western democracies to defeat corruption" must be seen as "a matter of national security."

Testifying before our Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee, former Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, agreed, saying of Russia's 2016 election meddling:

I believe [the Russians] are now emboldened to continue such activities in the future, both here and around world, and to do so even more intensely. If there has ever been a clarion call for vigilance and action against a threat to the very foundation of our democratic political system, this episode is it. I hope the American people recognize the severity of this threat and that we collectively counter it before it further erodes the fabric of our democracy.

How to counter it? Well, there are two important solutions that witnesses have identified in recent testimony before the Judiciary and other committees here in the Senate.

First, guard against the use of phony shell corporations as facilitators of corruption. Ms. Conley, as I said, wrote that corruption is the "lubricant" with which the Russians operate their interference schemes. She and her colleagues warn that to fight the corruption that gives Russia this channel of influence—and I quote her here—"enhancing transparency and the effectiveness of the Western democratic tools, instruments, and institutions is critical." One central way to cut off this channel of improper influence would be to require companies to disclose who their real owner is so that Russian influence can no longer hide behind anonymous American shell companies.

Another would be to crack down on the dark money that is flooding into American elections. It is illegal for foreign nationals to spend money or participate at all in American elections. Yet, post-Citizens United, the same dark money avenues that allow domestic election interference—for instance, that the Koch brothers use to manipulate American elections—are right out there to be used by Vladimir Putin. If they can hide their identity behind 501(c)(4)s and other dark money channels, so can operatives for the Russians.

Instead of taking up these important measures or even ensuring a thorough investigation into the 2016 election meddling, we are—to paraphrase the legendary Senator Sam Ervin of Watergate fame—chasing rabbits when we should be on a bear hunt.

Let's look at a few rabbits that have distracted us from the task at hand. Remember, when Michael Flynn, the President's former National Security Adviser, illicitly communicated with the Russian Ambassador about sanctions during the transition. Then in the White House, he lied to the FBI about it, which concerned the Justice Department so badly that the Acting Attorney General warned the White House Counsel personally, after which she was fired, but the President then

waited 18 days until all of this had become public in the media to ask for Michael Flynn's resignation. Out of all of that, the topic for many Republicans was the alleged leaks of classified information that allowed the story to come to light—not the story itself of problems at the highest level of our national security establishment. Off people went after the “leaks” rabbit.

Republicans then pivoted to talking about the “unmasking”—remember that word; we heard a lot of it around here—of identities in intelligence reporting and the purported misconduct of Obama administration officials. Trump even publicly suggested that former National Security Adviser Susan Rice may have committed a crime. So off people went after the “unmasking” rabbit.

Next, the President accused President Obama of wiretapping Trump Tower, an allegation so outrageous that even congressional Republicans have refused to stand by it, but my, what a bright and shiny rabbit it was for the weeks that it was still a distraction.

By the spring and summer, Republicans were railing against purported conflicts of interest by FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, a distinguished career public servant.

I ask unanimous consent that this article, “FBI ruled McCabe had no conflict of interest in Clinton probe,” be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

So off everybody went after the “McCabe's wife” rabbit.

After President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey to impede the Russia investigation and then told the Russian Foreign Minister and NBC that was why he had done it, the President launched another leak rabbit: a coordinated effort with his lawyers, congressional Republicans, and the rightwing media to suggest that Comey had leaked classified information by sharing with a friend his own contemporaneous notes of conversations with Trump.

Just last week, the President again suggested on Twitter that Comey should be charged with a crime—another bite at the “leaks” rabbit.

In early July, we learned of the June 2016 meeting at Trump Tower between Russian lawyer and operative Natalia Veselnitskaya and senior Trump campaign leaders seeking dirt on Hillary Clinton. Republicans tried to distract attention from that mess by suggesting that Veselnitskaya was in the country on a visa issued by Obama administration officials, with some rightwing media—aided by some congressional Republicans—even whipping on the “visa” rabbit by suggesting there was a setup orchestrated by the Obama administration against the Trump campaign.

Then came the “Fusion” rabbit. Because Fusion GPS had worked on separate projects—one with Christopher Steele and a separate one with Natalia

Veselnitskaya—some Republicans began suggesting either that Russia had been Fusion's client for the Steele dossier or that Steele was the unwitting victim of a Russian disinformation campaign.

Then there is the “Uranium One” rabbit, which began when a rightwing author suggested, without evidence, that Hillary Clinton may have been responsible for a Russian state company acquiring uranium mines in the United States. This rabbit remains a topic of investigation in Congress and in rightwing media.

Then there are the attacks on Bob Mueller, which, like rabbits, multiply by the hour. As the special counsel's investigation started heating up over the late summer and fall, the rightwing began investigating the investigation—alleged conflicts of interest, history of campaign donations, inappropriate text messages, questions about spouses' employment. But the big one was that the FBI was corruptly involved in the procurement of the Steele dossier and that this had launched the “witch hunt.” This, of course, is a very shiny rabbit.

However, a week ago, reporting by the New York Times confirmed that the FBI did not begin its investigation into Donald Trump's connections to Russia because of the so-called Steele dossier. This should not come as a surprise. We have already been told that U.S. allies warned American national security officials about Russian interference in our 2016 elections.

In response to a question from Ranking Member FEINSTEIN at our Crime and Terrorism Subcommittee hearing on May 8, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper confirmed that “Britain's intelligence service”—Britain's intelligence service—“first became aware in late 2015 of suspicious interactions between Trump advisers and Russian intelligence agents,” and the Brits passed that information on to U.S. intelligence agencies. Clapper confirmed that in “the spring of 2016, multiple European allies passed on additional information to the United States about contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians.” Clapper said that these reports were accurate and that “the specifics are quite sensitive.”

Now we have learned that Trump campaign foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos, who pled guilty last year to lying to the FBI, apparently told a senior Australian official in the spring of 2016 that Russia had dirt on Hillary Clinton. This is something he said he had been told by an intermediary for the Russians. When hacked emails started showing up that summer, Australia's Government became sufficiently concerned to let U.S. officials know about what they had learned from Papadopoulos.

So you have the British intelligence community warnings, the European intelligence community warnings, the Australian warnings, and Carter Page's travels to Russia. You have the attri-

bution of the DNC hack, the intrusion into those emails, to Russian hackers. You have the leaking of the stolen emails. You have abundant evidence out of all of that for the FBI that the Trump campaign's links to Russia required further investigation. It would have been a complete failure of their duty to not have looked further based on all of that evidence.

That is not to say that Christopher Steele and his work are not taken seriously by U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials. U.S. security agencies have relied on Steele's analysis long before any dossier appeared. Steele is a leading Russia expert. Beginning in 1990, as an undercover officer in Moscow, he watched the Soviet Union unravel. He observed Russia's current leaders ascend through the Russian security services during the 1990s and 2000s. He rose to a senior position on MI6's Russia desk in London. Since leaving MI6, his reports on Russia and Ukraine have been shared widely within the U.S. Government as credible reporting. A U.S. official told the Guardian that Steele's reports were “consistently reliable, meticulous, and well-informed.”

But you would never know this from listening to congressional Republicans. They have been repeating, in chorus with the White House and conservative media, the disproven claim that the Russians somehow commissioned the Steele dossier or that Steele somehow got suckered by the Russians or that some deep-state FBI set up the whole thing to pressure Trump. They have pushed to discredit Steele. They have pushed to discredit Fusion.

As one example, rewind to the Judiciary Committee's hearing on the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, last July. On the morning of the second day of that hearing, the President tweeted: “One of the things that has been lost in the politics of this situation is that the Russians collected and spread negative information about then candidate Trump.” This is Trump tweeting about himself. His tweet came shortly after a segment on FOX News centered on the same question. Other rightwing outlets parroted the same message.

That same day, Republicans in Congress spun out the same premise that Russians paid for the dossier and that the dossier was, to use their word, the “genesis” of the FBI's inquiry. I hope we have made it clear that this was not the genesis.

While the FARA hearing was still going on, that same day, the *gop.gov* website published this post:

[W]e now know a Russian backed, Democrat connected research firm, with a history of smearing individuals and pitching fake information to reporters, was hired by opponents of President Trump to compile a “dossier” of supposed Trump ties to Russia.

The information that was compiled was taken seriously by the highest level of our intelligence community along with our media, despite obvious signs that the firm behind it was tied to Russia.

As a reminder, this phony “dossier” helped spark the investigation now led by Special Counsel Mueller.

That is the rabbit we are chasing now.

The uniformity of the rightwing message that day with the White House was telling, but the message—the content of it—is simply not true. In fact, at that hearing, the witness denied any knowledge of any link between Russians and the clients of the Steele dossier.

In the months that followed, Fusion GPS’s founder, Glenn Simpson, spent over 20 hours speaking with congressional investigators, including investigators from the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I ask unanimous consent that his op-ed be printed in the RECORD as a third and final item at the conclusion of my remarks.

During these interviews, he specifically told Democratic and Republican staff alike that the dossier was taken seriously by the FBI because it corroborated reports the Bureau had already received from other sources—remember the British, the European, the Australian we have talked about—and a source inside the Trump campaign. From the Time’s recent reporting, we can conclude that that source was George Papadopoulos. This has all been known for months, but the narrative about Fusion GPS and the FBI grinds on, unhinged from fact.

The revelation about George Papadopoulos and the Australian Government should serve as a clarifying moment about the rightwing effort to undermine Bob Mueller’s investigation of the ties of the Trump campaign and his Presidency to Russia. The FBI investigation did not begin because of opposition research. It did not begin because researchers or journalists or American national security officials fell victim to Russian disinformation. It did not begin because of fake news or because Democrats needed an explanation for losing an election. It began when multiple allies, friends of the United States, warned us that the Russian Government was interfering in our democratic process—something many of them knew about from Russia’s interference in their own democratic process.

We still do not know to what extent that interference may have been facilitated or even simply known to members of the Trump campaign or other Trump associates. We still have done nothing to prevent further interference in our elections in 2018. The special counsel’s investigation and the investigations going on in Congress must be allowed to continue until all of the facts are known.

Here in the Senate, we should stop looking for new distractions, stop chasing rabbits, and start thinking about how we are going to protect our future elections—our 2018 election—against a repeat performance, which we have been warned about, by the Russians or

another foreign adversary, for that matter.

As the Center for Strategic and International Studies warns in its report, “The Kremlin Playbook,” we must fight the avenues for corruption that give Russia influence. We must “enhanc[e] transparency” in government and build “resilience against Russian influence” in our elections and elsewhere in American society.

I will conclude by saying that the best measure of our success in Congress will be an America defended against foreign election interference in time to protect our 2018 elections. If we have not achieved that, we have failed at our duty. I do not see us presently on a path to meet that goal. We are less than a year out from election day. We have work to do. Enough with the rabbits.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CIA’S POMPEO SAYS RUSSIA AND OTHERS
TRYING TO UNDERMINE U.S. ELECTIONS
(By Susan Cornwell)

WASHINGTON (REUTERS).—The head of the Central Intelligence Agency said on Sunday that Russia and others are trying to undermine elections in the United States, the next major one being in November when Republicans will try to keep control of Congress.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election to try to help President Donald Trump win, in part by hacking and releasing emails embarrassing to Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and spreading social media propaganda.

CIA Director Mike Pompeo told CBS that the Russian interference is longstanding, and continues. Asked on “Face the Nation” if Moscow is currently trying to undermine U.S. elections, Pompeo responded: “Yes sir, have been for decades.”

“Yes, I continue to be concerned, not only about the Russians, but about others’ efforts as well,” Pompeo said, without giving details. “We have many foes who want to undermine Western democracy.”

Moscow denies any meddling in the 2016 elections to help Republican Trump win. U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller is investigating whether any crimes were committed. Two Trump associates, former national security adviser Michael Flynn and campaign aide George Papadopoulos have pleaded guilty to lying to FBI agents in the probe. Trump denies any campaign collusion with Russia.

Trump has at times suggested that he accepts the U.S. intelligence agencies’ assessment that Russia sought to interfere in the election but at other times has said he accepts Russian President Vladimir Putin’s denials that Moscow meddled.

Trump has frequently spoken of wanting to improve relations with Putin, even though Russia has frustrated U.S. policy in Syria and Ukraine and done little to help Washington in its standoff with North Korea.

Pompeo told CBS that the CIA had an important function as a part of the national security team to keep U.S. elections secure and democratic. “We are working diligently to do that. So we’re going to work against the Russians or any others who threaten that very outcome,” he said.

Trump said on Saturday that he planned an active year on the campaign trail on behalf of Republican candidates running in the mid-term elections, in which all of the House

of Representatives and one-third of the Senate will be up for election. Republicans hold majorities in both.

[From The Hill, Jan. 5, 2018]

FBI RULED MCCABE HAD NO CONFLICT OF
INTEREST IN CLINTON PROBE: DOCS
(By Julia Manchester)

The FBI said in documents released Friday that Deputy Director Andrew McCabe did not have any role in the probe into Hillary Clinton’s private email server while his wife ran as a Democrat for state office in Virginia.

The documents note that Jill McCabe announced her candidacy for state Senate in Virginia in March 2015, while Andrew McCabe’s role as deputy director started in February 2016, three months after his wife lost her electoral bid.

Andrew McCabe had asked ethics officials if his wife’s candidacy would lead to a potential conflict of interest while he was working as an assistant director at the FBI Field Office in Washington, D.C., the documents show.

“From the first contemplation that his wife would run for office in Virginia, [McCabe] sought out and consulted with ethics officers, which included briefings on the Hatch Act,” the records state.

A “system of recusal” was also put in place to prevent any potential conflicts of interests, according to the documents.

The release of the documents comes after President Trump and other Republicans have claimed McCabe had a conflict of interest due to his wife’s electoral bid, noting that her campaign was supported by a super-PAC associated to Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D), a Clinton ally.

“How can FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, the man in charge, along with leakin’ James Comey, of the Phony Hillary Clinton investigation (including her 33,000 illegally deleted emails) be given \$700,000 for wife’s campaign by Clinton Puppets during investigation?” Trump tweeted last month:

“How can FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, the man in charge, along with leakin’ James Comey of the Phony Hillary Clinton investigation (including her 33,000 illegally deleted emails) be given \$700,000 for wife’s campaign by Clinton Puppets during investigation?” 3:27 PM—Dec. 23, 2017

Trump’s tweet and others he sent targeting the No. 2 FBI official amid the federal Russia probe came after it was revealed McCabe would be retiring from his post in the coming months.

Trump interviewed McCabe to be FBI director in May after he fired James Comey from the top post. The president ultimately tapped Christopher Wray for the bureau’s top spot.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 2, 2018]
THE REPUBLICANS’ FAKE INVESTIGATIONS
(By Glenn R. Simpson and Peter Fritsch)

A generation ago, Republicans sought to protect President Richard Nixon by urging the Senate Watergate committee to look at supposed wrongdoing by Democrats in previous elections. The committee chairman, Sam Ervin, a Democrat, said that would be “as foolish as the man who went bear hunting and stopped to chase rabbits.”

Today, amid a growing criminal inquiry into Russian meddling in the 2016 election, congressional Republicans are again chasing rabbits. We know because we’re their favorite quarry.

In the year since the publication of the so-called Steele dossier—the collection of intelligence reports we commissioned about Donald Trump’s ties to Russia—the president

has repeatedly attacked us on Twitter. His allies in Congress have dug through our bank records and sought to tarnish our firm to punish us for highlighting his links to Russia. Conservative news outlets and even our former employer, *The Wall Street Journal*, have spun a succession of mendacious conspiracy theories about our motives and backers.

We are happy to correct the record. In fact, we already have.

Three congressional committees have heard over 21 hours of testimony from our firm, Fusion GPS. In those sessions, we toppled the far right's conspiracy theories and explained how *The Washington Free Beacon* and the Clinton campaign—the Republican and Democratic funders of our Trump research—separately came to hire us in the first place.

We walked investigators through our year-long effort to decipher Mr. Trump's complex business past, of which the Steele dossier is but one chapter. And we handed over our relevant bank records—while drawing the line at a fishing expedition for the records of companies we work for that have nothing to do with the Trump case.

Republicans have refused to release full transcripts of our firm's testimony, even as they selectively leak details to media outlets on the far right. It's time to share what our company told investigators.

We don't believe the Steele dossier was the trigger for the F.B.I.'s investigation into Russian meddling. As we told the Senate Judiciary Committee in August, our sources said the dossier was taken so seriously because it corroborated reports the bureau had received from other sources, including one inside the Trump camp.

The intelligence committees have known for months that credible allegations of collusion between the Trump camp and Russia were pouring in from independent sources during the campaign. Yet lawmakers in the thrall of the president continue to wage a cynical campaign to portray us as the unwitting victims of Kremlin disinformation.

We suggested investigators look into the bank records of Deutsche Bank and others that were funding Mr. Trump's businesses. Congress appears uninterested in that tip: Reportedly, ours are the only bank records the House Intelligence Committee has subpoenaed.

We told Congress that from Manhattan to Sunny Isles Beach, Fla., and from Toronto to Panama, we found widespread evidence that Mr. Trump and his organization had worked with a wide array of dubious Russians in arrangements that often raised questions about money laundering. Likewise, those deals don't seem to interest Congress.

We explained how, from our past journalistic work in Europe, we were deeply familiar with the political operative Paul Manafort's coziness with Moscow and his financial ties to Russian oligarchs close to Vladimir Putin.

Finally, we debunked the biggest canard being pushed by the president's men—the notion that we somehow knew of the June 9, 2016, meeting in Trump Tower between some Russians and the Trump brain trust. We first learned of that meeting from news reports last year—and the committees know it. They also know that these Russians were unaware of the former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele's work for us and were not sources for his reports.

Yes, we hired Mr. Steele, a highly respected Russia expert. But we did so without informing him whom we were working for and gave him no specific marching orders beyond this basic question: Why did Mr. Trump repeatedly seek to do deals in a notoriously corrupt police state that most serious investors shun?

What came back shocked us. Mr. Steele's sources in Russia (who were not paid) reported on an extensive—and now confirmed—effort by the Kremlin to help elect Mr. Trump president. Mr. Steele saw this as a crime in progress and decided he needed to report it to the F.B.I.

We did not discuss that decision with our clients, or anyone else. Instead, we deferred to Mr. Steele, a trusted friend and intelligence professional with a long history of working with law enforcement. We did not speak to the F.B.I. and haven't since.

After the election, Mr. Steele decided to share his intelligence with Senator John McCain via an emissary. We helped him do that. The goal was to alert the United States national security community to an attack on our country by a hostile foreign power. We did not, however, share the dossier with BuzzFeed, which to our dismay published it last January.

We're extremely proud of our work to highlight Mr. Trump's Russia ties. To have done so is our right under the First Amendment.

In is time to stop chasing rabbits. The public still has much to learn about a man with the most troubling business past of any United States president. Congress should release transcripts of our firm's testimony, so that the American people can learn the truth about our work and most important, what happened to our democracy.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I now yield, per the pending agreement, to my distinguished friend from Connecticut.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE for his very erudite and insightful summary of the bright, shiny toys and rabbits and rabbit holes that a number of our colleagues have attempted to use to distract the Judiciary Committee and this body from what should be its quest for the truth; that is, the truth about the Russian attack on our democracy during the last election and potential collusion in that attack—specifically, collusion by the Trump campaign—and obstruction of justice. Indeed, obstruction of justice is within the direct purview of the Judiciary Committee.

I want to thank my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE for joining me in a letter that we wrote to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator GRASSLEY, asking that he very simply make public the transcript of the interview with Glenn Simpson conducted by our staff. Senator GRASSLEY declined. But, earlier today, Senator FEINSTEIN released the interview, advancing the American people's right and need to know the full truth.

I want to applaud Senator FEINSTEIN's leadership in using her proper authority as the ranking member to serve this vital public interest. I am grateful to her for her courage and strength in moving forward and disclosing the transcript to prevent its use as a dangerous distraction from the critical work of our committee. I want to thank at least one of our colleagues across the aisle, Senator CORNYN, for apparently supporting that step.

The toys and rabbits and rabbit holes are hardly new to efforts by defenders

of an administration against an investigation, and perhaps for some amusement as well as enlightenment, I want to cite a satiric column done by Art Buchwald in 1973.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HERE ARE HANDY EXCUSES FOR NIXON BACKERS

(By Art Buchwald)

WASHINGTON.—These are difficult times for people who are defending the Nixon administration. No matter where they go they are attacked by pseudo-liberals, McGovern lovers, heterosexual constitutionalists and paranoid John Dean believers.

As a public service, I am printing instant responses for loyal Nixonites when they are attacked at a party. Please cut it out and carry it in your pocket.

- 1—Everyone does it.
- 2—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 3—A President can't keep track of everything his staff does.
- 4—The press is blowing the whole thing up.
- 5—Whatever Nixon did was for national security.
- 6—The Democrats are sore because they lost the election.
- 7—Are you going to believe a rat like John Dean or the President of the United States?
- 8—Wait till all the facts come out.
- 9—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 10—If you impeach Nixon, you get Agnew.
- 11—The only thing wrong with Watergate is they got caught.
- 12—What about Daniel Ellsberg stealing the Pentagon Papers?
- 13—It happens in Europe all the time.
- 14—People would be against Nixon no matter what he did.
- 15—I'd rather have a crook in the White House than a fool.
- 16—L.B.J. used to read FBI reports every night.
- 17—What's the big deal about finding out what your opposition is up to?
- 18—The President was too busy running the country to know what was going on.
- 19—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 20—People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
- 21—McGovern would have lost anyway.
- 22—Maybe the Committee for the Re-Election of the President went a little too far, but they were just a bunch of eager kids.
- 23—I'm not for breaking the law, but sometimes you have to do it to save the country.
- 24—Nixon made a mistake. He's only human.
- 25—Do you realize what Watergate is doing to the dollar abroad?
- 26—What about Harry Truman and the deep freeze scandal?
- 27—Franklin D. Roosevelt did a lot worse things.
- 28—I'm sick and tired of hearing about Watergate and so is everybody else.
- 29—This thing should be tried in the courts and not on television.
- 30—When Nixon gives his explanation of what happened there are going to be a lot of people in this country with egg on their faces.
- 31—My country right or wrong.
- 32—What about Chappaquiddick?
- 33—I think the people who make all this fuss about Watergate should be shot.
- 34—If the Democrats had the money they would have done the same thing.
- 35—I never trusted Haldeman and Ehrlichman to start with.

36—If you say one more word about Watergate I'll punch you in the nose.

A—If the person is bigger than you: "If you say one more word about Watergate I'm leaving this house."

B—If it's your own house and the person is bigger than you: "What about Chappaquiddick?"

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. Buchwald wrote a satirical list of tactics Republicans were using to keep Americans from focusing on the Watergate scandal. The list is eerily familiar. The tactics being employed by the Trump supporters today ring of those same tactics used in Watergate. Buchwald suggests focusing on accusations made against prominent Democrats or individuals who had accused Richard Nixon of wrongdoing. He suggests attacking the media. He suggests saying: "The Democrats are sore because they lost." He suggests deflecting blame to a "bunch of eager kids"—perhaps sounding like the reference to "coffee boys" today—and saying that this investigation is "bad for the dollar," much like bad for America abroad.

I am very confident—and I want to emphasize this point very emphatically—that the special counsel will be in no way distracted from his investigation and his team will be undeterred by these tactics. But the American people should not be distracted or deterred either and, equally important, the Judiciary Committee, the U.S. Senate, and the Congress as a whole has a duty here that is, in fact, vulnerable to that same distraction. We must persevere.

What our Republican colleagues are doing at this point is indicated by a recent New York Times article. The article describes President Trump's efforts to persuade congressional allies to drop their investigations, and it says:

Another Republican Senator said Mr. Trump had not urged him to help bring the Russia inquiry to a halt. Instead, the Senator said, the President nudged him to begin an investigation into Hillary Clinton's connection with the intelligence-gathering firm Fusion GPS, which produced a dossier of allegations about Mr. Trump's ties to Moscow.

The goal was to stop the investigation of Russian meddling, but the implication in the article is that the President knew he could achieve that goal as effectively, or at least more practically, by distracting from those investigations, diverting resources to other issues, and muddying the waters for the American people. That is the playbook from 1973 that is referenced by Art Buchwald in his 1973 column.

Here is the danger: Distractions are dangerous, and efforts to discredit law enforcement are equally perilous. Those efforts have included not only the urging for an investigation of Uranium One and Fusion GPS but also attacks on the integrity of some members of the FBI and the FBI as a whole and attacks on individual members of the special counsel's team, on the team as a whole, and on Robert Mueller himself. The effort plainly is to discredit the investigation before it reaches a

potentially incriminating conclusion and to stop the investigation, but if not stop it, at least to demean its credibility before charges are brought.

It is standard operating procedure. We know as prosecutors. The distinguished Senator from Rhode Island and I served as U.S. attorneys and then attorneys general for our States. We know going into the courtroom that we can expect to be attacked and that our teams can be expected to be attacked. That is what defense lawyers do. That is what they do because they hope to demean and discredit and dismantle the credibility of prosecutors before the jury in the courtroom. Here, the courtroom is not a court of law but the court of public opinion. Our Republican friends have launched that preemptive strike, methodically and meticulously, just as the special counsel is engaging in his investigation methodically and meticulously.

Now, I referred to Republican colleagues, and I believe strongly and passionately that many, if not most, of our Republican colleagues share our zeal for the rule of law and for a just outcome to this investigation. The reason is very simple. The Russian attack on our democracy imperils not just this administration and not just one election. It imperils our democracy as a whole. The meddling in our elections was perhaps done to advance the Trump candidacy in 2016, but it can be used against the Trump candidacy in 2020. It can be used against another Republican candidate in that year. It could be used in 2018 against other candidates for Congress or for State election.

My Republican colleagues have been as eloquent as any of us in defining that threat because there is no doubt in the intelligence community that it is a threat, that the Russians did interfere, and that they sought to advance the Trump candidacy. Whether there was an impact and what the impact was may never be known, but the effort is clear. It involved a massive campaign of disinformation, propaganda, cyber attack, and other means. That is what the FBI learned was happening, not as a result of Christopher Steele but from sources within the Trump campaign, including George Papadopoulos, and from other intelligence sources, and that is what we must make sure is known to the American public. We must make sure that anyone who aided the Russians pays a price and that the Russians themselves pay a price, because if there is no price, it will be done with impunity again.

So there should be—and I believe there is—bipartisan apprehension about that threat to our Nation's security. That is the reason that the Judiciary Committee's investigation, along with the special counsel, is so important, because our purview includes obstruction of justice and the integrity of the Department of Justice. Any interference politically with the FBI's investigation into Russian meddling

must be prevented in the future as well. Only the Judiciary Committee can frame and craft legislation that will help to protect the FBI.

Senator WHITEHOUSE and I, and Senator FEINSTEIN and others on the committee, will be proposing such legislation based on what we know so far. It is legislation that essentially protects the rule of law against such efforts to obstruct justice and politically interfere.

The intelligence community's conclusions about Russian meddling did not rely on the credibility of Glenn Simpson or Christopher Steele. The two guilty pleas and convictions that the special counsel has already secured do not rely on the credibility of Simpson or Steele. Without fear of contradiction, I can predict that additional convictions and indictments will be based on fact and law, not on the credibility of Simpson and Steele. The conclusions reached by Simpson, Steele, or anybody else are relevant only insofar as they are supported and backed and proved by facts and consistent with relevant law.

Now, in fact, as we know, Christopher Steele tried to blow the whistle on the Russians. He brought to the FBI's attention information that he thought was relevant to protecting the United States of America against Russian interference. As my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE has outlined in detail, the FBI already knew of it and courteously heard from Christopher Steele and later interviewed him.

The effort to undermine the credibility of the FBI by pointing to Christopher Steele completely misses the mark. In fact, I am deeply disappointed that the first major action by our Republican colleagues on the Judiciary Committee was aimed at someone who reported wrongdoing, not committed it, and it was done without any cooperation or even consultation with Democratic colleagues. It is really a betrayal of the spirit that I think should characterize this very serious investigation, because it should be bipartisan.

My hope is that these distractions, dangerous as they are, will, in fact, not divert either our committee or the special counsel. The pace of our committee's investigation—again, to be very blunt—has been shamefully slow. I hope that its pace will quicken and that it will intensify and that there will be hearings in public with witnesses under oath and subpoenas of documents. I have said it repeatedly. I hope we will use those tools because only by relying on our powers to investigate effectively and comprehensively will we protect the goals of upholding integrity and justice.

As for the special counsel and our law enforcement community, I think they should know that we support them and that we will protect the special counsel against political interference. That is why there is legislation I have proposed, along with my

colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE and others. It is bipartisan legislation. I thank Senators TILLIS and GRAHAM, as well as Senators COONS and BOOKER, for joining in this legislation. That legislation has already had a hearing. It should be voted to the floor and passed by the Congress so that there is no question that the special counsel will be protected against interference or firing.

As that investigation moves closer to the Oval Office, as it tightens its grip on members of the administration, there will be increasing threats and efforts to intimidate. The FBI and the Department of Justice, as well as the special counsel, have a well-earned reputation for integrity and zeal. It is part of our rule of law that a law is enforced. Enforcement of a law depends on thorough and independent investigations that are pursued without fear or favor, without efforts to distract or demean. This body, the U.S. Congress, has an obligation to support those kinds of values. They are uniquely American values. They are the underpinning of all of our laws, all that we hold dear, and all that we celebrate in this body and in this country.

My hope is that we will be part of the effort to avoid politicizing the pursuit of justice. Politicization of the pursuit of justice diverts energy and attention away from credible criminal investigations. It sends a message to this President and future Presidents—and everybody who occupies any office—that there are no repercussions for diverting and distracting and for the ploys and rabbit holes that may be used to squander resources or undermine credibility.

Republicans and Democrats alike should join in the effort to preserve the rule of law. My hope is that we will and will do so without delay because every day that passes when these kinds of false, baseless, and biased innuendos and rumors are raised and given credence is a day that undermines those values that we hold dear.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Senators WHITEHOUSE and BLUMENTHAL for their remarks.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. President, it has been 100 days since this Congress allowed the Children's Health Insurance Program to expire. Congress did nothing in September, October, November, and December, and now we are more than a week into January—100 days of anxiety for parents, 100 days of wondering if their kids will be kicked off their coverage, 100 days of worrying if they will be able to afford their child's prescriptions or worrying whether they can take them to the doctor if they get the flu.

Members of Congress—new Members, such as Senators SMITH and JONES, Members like Senator HATCH, who has been here for 40 years, and all of us—have healthcare paid for by taxpayers.

We remember the discussion of the tax bill written down the hall in the office of Majority Leader MCCONNELL. The Senate found plenty of time in December to pass a massive handout for corporations. The Presiding Officer, the Senator from Florida, has since questioned whether too much of this bill went to corporate interests. More than 80 percent of the tax cut bill went to the richest 1 percent.

In addition, we know it was a massive handout for corporations that sent jobs overseas. We are going to see more companies shut down in Mansfield, Lima, Zanesville, Chillicothe, Portsmouth, and in big cities like Columbus, Cleveland, and Cincinnati. We are going to see more plants close and move overseas because this Senate and the House passed a tax bill that encourages more corporations to ship jobs overseas. All the while, this body couldn't be bothered to give families more than a short-term funding Band-Aid for CHIP, which experts have said will not even last the last 3 months they promised.

I applaud the Presiding Officer, the Senator from Florida, for his efforts to enlarge at least some of the tax bill to put more money into the pockets of working families, particularly low-income working families. It was not enough, but at least some effort was made.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are reporting that some States will run out of money by January 19, next week. In my State of Ohio, 209,000 children rely on CHIP. Who are these kids? These are sons and daughters of Ohioans, who are working, in most cases, making \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour. They are the sons and daughters of parents who don't have insurance not because they aren't working as hard or harder than we do, but they don't have insurance simply because their parents happen to work at a job where they are not provided insurance.

There are 209,000 Ohio children who rely on CHIP, a program that has been bipartisan for 20 years. It was without controversy in the past. Families in some States already got letters last year and early this year warning them that their children could lose their healthcare.

Think about these families. The parents of some of these millions of children around the country come home from work, working in a \$10-an-hour job, not making a lot of money. They are working every bit as hard as we do. They go to the mailbox and see a letter from their State government. I will read one of these letters, a copy of which went to tens of thousands of parents: Because Congress has not acted yet, we need to let you know there is a chance that the CHIP Program may have to be shut down. In other words, there is a chance that your children's health insurance will be cut off.

Remember, this is because of the inaction in this body. This is because Senators, who have insurance paid for

by taxpayers, would rather vote for tax cuts, would rather do whatever we do all day instead of renewing the Children's Health Insurance Program.

This letter goes on: If Congress does not renew Federal funds for CHIP in time, you will get another letter in January telling you your benefits will end.

So first, it is a warning. Some parents got this warning right around Christmastime. They are already struggling financially. They are not giving their children nearly as much as they want for Christmas because they are making \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour. They are just trying to stay above water. They are just trying to raise their kids. They get a letter like this at Christmastime saying: If Congress doesn't act, there is really bad news; your kids are going to lose their insurance. Then the same letter says: If Congress doesn't act, in January you will get another letter saying your insurance is cut off.

It is already an expensive time of year. There is record cold in Ohio. Several of our grandchildren live in Columbus, one of them in St. Croix, and two in Providence, RI. When a number of our grandchildren were around, it was too cold to go outside. It was that kind of winter in Ohio. The day after Christmas, temperatures dropped to single digits for 5, 6, or 7 days running. Families are paying more for their heating bill. At Christmastime, of course, it is more expensive. Now their government adds to this list of worries.

How do they plan their budget for this year if they don't know whether or not they will have to shell out thousands of dollars more for care for their kids? Remember, 9 million children are at risk because of Republican inaction.

Senator PORTMAN, my Republican colleague from Ohio, and I and almost every other Senator on the Finance Committee voted to move forward on CHIP, to renew it for these 9 million children for 5 years. That was a good thing. It passed out of committee, but Senator MCCONNELL, for whatever reason, didn't think this was important enough to actually put it on the floor, move on it, and get it to the President.

I have no idea if the President will sign it. I don't think he knows much about the Children's Health Insurance Program, but I assume his advisers will say that it is probably a good idea to sign it. But he hasn't had a chance to sign it because the majority leader doesn't think this bill is important enough—that these 9 million children are important enough—that Congress should take action.

These are often families with two working parents. They might make \$8, \$10, or \$12 an hour, but they are working in jobs where they are not lucky enough to have health insurance. They work for companies or many for small businesses that, for whatever reason, can't afford it. Whatever the reason, they are working for companies that don't offer health insurance coverage