

perpetuating the opioid epidemic, fueling a cycle of violence, and abusing innocent civilians, they are growing richer and richer by the minute.

Targeting these organizations means more than stopping the flow of drugs into our country; it means ending a cycle of crime and violence and working together with Mexico and Central American countries to help them escape the savage grip of these criminal organizations.

Additionally, we need to strengthen security cooperation with our international partners so that they are able to more effectively fight side by side with us. Mexico and Central and South American nations often lack the ability to adequately counter the trafficking occurring within their borders, and corruption serves as a major roadblock in efforts to stop criminal activity.

There are a number of programs in place already—many of which began through the Merida Initiative—which have yielded positive results, but we need to look at all of these and make sure we understand what works and what does not work so we can justify the expenditure of U.S. taxpayer dollars in this fight. By strengthening and expanding these operations, we can help our southern neighbors fight drugs, crime, and corruption within their own borders, which would more effectively reduce the flow of drugs and other illicit goods moving across our southern border.

Finally, if we want any of these efforts to be sustainable, we can't just focus on law and order; we must look at ways to invest in economic development to help these countries build stronger economies. These are beautiful, vibrant countries that are also victims of endemic crime in the region. Helping them promote economic security will carry immense benefits for the entire region, and it is something we need to discuss more in the coming months.

Senator FEINSTEIN and I have worked together in the past on legislation to address the drug epidemic, such as the Substance Abuse Prevention Act, which is now the law of the land. This Congress, we will continue our important work together on the International Narcotics Control Caucus. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses this afternoon and engaging in a larger discussion—hopefully a nationwide discussion—about how we can reverse the devastation caused by the opioid crisis and drug overdoses in America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that 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 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. CAPITO).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

FOREIGN AGENTS DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, for nearly 2 years Special Counsel Mueller's investigation captivated Washington. Most of the media reporting focused on speculation and false allegations of a criminal conspiracy between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin. This reporting was fueled by critics eager to all but guarantee the President's guilt. After a very exhaustive investigation—and, of course, millions and millions of taxpayer dollars being spent by the Mueller investigation—many of those same critics still can't accept that Mueller and his investigative team of Democratic donors found no collusion or crime.

The continuing political noise over the last 2 years, however, risks drowning out critical siren warnings of another real threat—self-interested and surreptitious foreign influence in our political discourse. Mueller's team indicted dozens of Russians for a scheme to sow discord in American politics through our social media and the release of hacked emails. However, not enough attention has been paid to foreign interests secretly enlisting American cutouts to directly influence our laws, our public policies, and, most importantly, public opinion to destroy our social cohesion.

This is a very serious problem that should send shivers down the spine of anyone in government who meets with lobbyists. If lobbyists or public relations firms are pushing policy preferences at the behest of foreign powers and foreign interests, we ought to know about it.

This week I introduced legislation to strengthen and also fine-tune enforcement authorities to better expose clandestine foreign influence campaigns. My bipartisan bill, the Foreign Agents Disclosure and Registration Enhancement Act, will encourage greater compliance with a very often ignored requirement for lobbyists working on behalf of foreign entities to tell the U.S. people who they are working for. It accomplishes this by creating critical updates to one of our Nation's oldest lobbying disclosure laws.

Way back in 1938, Congress first passed a bill to accomplish a way to expose this foreign influence in America, particularly within our government. That bill passed in 1938 is called the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The bill was meant to unmask Nazi propa-

ganda and identify foreign attempts to influence Congress and the American public. Until recently, however, this Foreign Agents Registration Act has been seldom used.

Now—get this—only 15 violators of this act have been criminally prosecuted since 1966, and 1966 was the date when this law was last updated. Of course, now I am trying to update it again. About half of these prosecutions, of the 15, stem from the work of Special Counsel Mueller's investigation, though that is not due to the lack of foreign influence efforts to affect our Federal decision making.

As part of my oversight efforts, I first raised concerns about the shoddy Foreign Agent Registration Act enforcement in 2015. Now, I did this before Donald Trump launched his Presidential campaign. I did it when a former Clinton White House staffer and a lawyer for a Georgian political party failed to register as foreign agents.

I also raised concerns about work for Ukrainians by Paul Manafort and the Podesta Group, and about reports that the Democratic National Committee worked with Ukraine to undermine the Trump campaign. I raised concerns when the firm behind the discredited Steele dossier failed to register for its lobbying work to repeal U.S. sanctions against Russia.

Now, as it turned out, that is the same lobbying effort that was behind the bait and switch at the Trump Tower in June of 2016. I don't have to go into details about that Trump Tower meeting. That is a very famous and well documented meeting.

I even subpoenaed Manafort to testify at the Judiciary Committee hearing on lax Foreign Agents Registration Act enforcement, and I praised Mueller for dusting off the law that had been ignored by lobbyists and prosecutors for so long because they really didn't want the American public to know that they were working for a foreign country.

Now, that may sound like that is something illegal. What is illegal is that you don't tell the American people whom you are working for. It is not, as far as I know, illegal to work for the interests of another country, as they might have some legitimate interest in our policymaking, but the point is that the public ought to know whom they are working for.

Now, I talked about subpoenaing Manafort, and in the end Manafort, his colleague Rick Gates, and former Obama White House Counsel Greg Craig were among those indicted for violating this Foreign Agents Registration Act.

My Foreign Agents Registration Act oversight activities have been done without regard to power, party, or privilege. I happen to have a reputation as an equal-opportunity overseer to see that the laws are faithfully enforced, and I believe that this very act of registration of foreign agents ought to be better enforced and enforced equally.

Now, all of this talk about this law may have started as a creative tactic by an aggressive team of investigators to pressure Manafort into spilling non-existent details on the Trump campaign, but Mueller's probe had the positive effect of shining a light on the Justice Department's registration unit on the enforcement of this law of 1938, and it also has shown light, as well, on a legion of lobbyists who work for foreign agents who had flown under the radar for very many years.

Now, because of all this transparency, the charges spurred a rush on K Street. New foreign agent registrations increased by 50 percent from 2016 to 2017. Now, I can't believe a single one of those people registering of that 50 percent increase in registration didn't realize this law existed, but they probably thought they could get away with something that most people have been getting away with for decades.

Now, Attorney General Barr also recently pledged to prioritize enforcement of that law as he heads up the Justice Department, and, of course, we all ought to be pleased to hear that from the Attorney General.

However, even though the 1938 law is finally being taken more seriously, that law still lacks key enforcement authorities needed to investigate and hold accountable covert conveyors of foreign interests.

The 1938 law also includes a broad exemption for anyone already registered with Congress as a lobbyist. It is time that we ask whether this exemption continues to serve the public interest and operates as intended.

Moreover, even those registered under the 1938 law aren't required to clearly disclose that they are working on behalf of a foreign government or entity if they happen to be meeting with Capitol Hill or administration officials. Policymakers need to know when these meetings are driven by foreign interests.

Now, getting back to the legislation I am introducing, this bipartisan bill, based on my oversight work, grants Federal investigators a lot of new tools, such as civil investigative demand authority to help the Justice Department gain access to material needed to identify covert foreign influence and improve the act's compliance. This bill strengthens the Justice Department's hand in rooting out those who attempt to shield their operation from the American people and policymakers.

We have to ensure accountability, and to accomplish that goal, my bill provides key controls on who in the Justice Department can use the new authority, and it provides due process protection. This authority will also sunset after 5 years, requiring the Justice Department to demonstrate that the law has been appropriately used if Congress is to reauthorize it.

In addition, the bill requires a review of the new authority by the Justice Department's inspector general.

This bipartisan bill also improves deterrence by strengthening the penalties

that scofflaws face for violating the law's registration and disclosure requirements.

It also requires foreign agents to immediately disclose their clients. That way, policymakers—including those of us in the Senate—can evaluate their positions in light of those associations.

Even my own office has, in the past, been targeted by secretive lobbying efforts orchestrated by foreign powers, whose policy interests were diametrically opposed to those of our great country. I saw through the ploy, but anyone in government should have full awareness into who they are meeting with and why those meetings are taking place.

The bill requires the Justice Department to craft a comprehensive enforcement strategy for the law to better coordinate agency efforts, to analyze the law's current exemptions and fee structure, and to promote transparency by ensuring the ongoing proactive release of the law's advisory opinions.

Finally, it establishes a review of the Lobbying Disclosure Act exemptions to determine whether and to what extent it has been abused to conceal foreign influence.

Legitimate interests engaging in legitimate conduct shouldn't bear an unnecessary burden. Hopefully, in the way we have written this law, that unnecessary burden is avoided. But, at the same time, we must also be certain that this exemption hasn't created an opportunity for abuse by those who wish to operate in the dark. With this increase in registration under the 1938 law, we find that a lot of people must have been operating in the dark.

This bill is a product of my years-long oversight into the 1938 law as well as bipartisan cooperation. It reflects a consensus that the curtain over foreign influence has to be peeled back.

This year, compared to the bill I introduced last year—and we had competition with other bills last year—we have been able to find a bipartisan effort that combines what other Members' thinking is on the subject. So I am happy to announce that Senators FEINSTEIN, CORNYN, SHAHEEN, RUBIO, and YOUNG are cosponsors at the time of this introduction, and I hope that other Members will join us as well.

The Mueller investigation might not have brought the legal charges that many of the President's critics were hoping for. They were hoping for an excuse to get President Trump out of office. But at least that investigation by Mueller was a powerful indictment of our government's lax enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act and also of our willingness to take the bait of foreign powers seeking to wreak havoc on our civic discourse.

In the wake of the Mueller investigation, it is on us, right here in the Congress, to keep our eye on the ball. It is on us to strengthen our defenses against hidden foreign influence and preserve the voice of the American people. I believe with the introduction of

the bipartisan Foreign Agents Disclosure and Registration Enhancement Act that we will accomplish these ends.

Again, I welcome a lot of additional cosponsorship of my colleagues. This is definitely a good government piece of legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FLOODING IN ILLINOIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Saturday morning, I was in Alton, IL. This picture here is what we saw. You have to look closely to understand what I am looking at here. These grain elevators are in downtown Alton, IL, and this is the Mississippi River, which has now risen to the point that it is just below this red line. I know this red line a little bit because it marks the 1993 flood level of the same Mississippi River, so we are almost there. We were hoping over the weekend that the river would crest and that Alton and so many other communities in the Midwest would be spared further flooding.

The interesting thing is, when I went down there to talk to the people engaged in the recovery effort and trying to help fight these floodwaters, there was an insight I was really surprised to hear. I asked them what is different about this flood, because we get lots of floods in the Midwest. The difference with this flood, according to those who have done the research, is this is a flood of longer duration than any flood we have seen since 1927.

When I spoke to the mayor of the town of Alton, IL, I said: So this comes and goes? He said: It never goes, Senator. We have had six floods in the last 10 years that were supposed to be breaking historic records.

So let's step back for a minute and take an honest look at this, if we can, and realize that we are living in a little different world this year than we did just a few years ago. The extreme weather events, which we hear reported every single day, suggest that something is going on beyond just changes in the weather. When we see rainfall and snowfall in the upper Midwest, which is now responsible for this flooding situation here, we have to ask ourselves the obvious question: Is this just a one-off event, or are we seeing the new normal? And if this is the new normal, are we prepared for it?

When these floodwaters hopefully recede in the very near future, there will be a lot of repair work to be done. There is a lot of damage to homes, businesses, and families. But then there will be a big question: What do we do next? If this is the new normal in our weather patterns, if we are in fact seeing a change in our climate around