

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 nonexistent 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. CASSIDY). 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

the United States and around the world, how will we respond? My first concern, of course, is my home State of Illinois and the folks who are kind enough to let me serve them in the U.S. Senate.

I want to do everything I can to work with the Army Corps of Engineers, which is a critical part of flood protection for the Midwest. These earthen levees you will see along the shorelines of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers have been sorely taxed by these floodwaters. When they are drenched and soaked over long periods of time, they tend to weaken. We count on the Army Corps of Engineers and the good people locally to step forward and help us fortify these levees. We need to continue to do that, maybe even more so because of the frequency of the floods we are seeing in the Midwest.

But we have a responsibility here in Washington too. What are we doing about the climate change that is happening around the world? What are we doing to make sure our kids and grandkids will inherit an Earth that is habitable and that won't face these kinds of awful occurrences on a regular basis? Are we willing to make sacrifices and changes in the comfort of our own lives just a little bit so that our kids and grandkids have a world that they can live in, a world that is habitable, that they can pass on to the next generation? I don't think that is too much to ask.

There was an agreement reached a few years ago in Paris. Every nation in the world signed up to do something. Every single nation in the world signed up to do something to reach a common goal of stopping the warming of this planet and everything that has followed. Then what happened with the election of this President? President Trump stepped forward and said: Count us out. The United States is not in the Paris Agreement any longer. We are the only nation in the world to step away from that agreement. The rest of the world understands the gravity of this challenge. Today, it is the floods in the Midwest. Tomorrow, it will be that tornado in Oklahoma. The list goes on and on and on.

I stand ready to work with everyone I can locally to deal with this, but I also plead with this administration—open your eyes to the reality of climate change in the world and what it is doing to the extreme weather patterns we currently face.

Our Governor, J. B. Pritzker, has declared a disaster in 34 of Illinois's 102 counties—about a third of the State. Four hundred Illinois National Guard men and women members are working sometimes around the clock to do their part, and my hat is off to them and their families for their extraordinary sacrifice.

The levees, like the Nutwood Levee, which isn't far from Alton, IL, were breached by floodwaters, and over the past week, a small town was evacuated. State and local officials have urged ev-

eryone there to be careful and make certain that they do everything they can to protect themselves and their property.

When you take a look at this picture taken in Alton, IL, you don't see the real story. There are a few people, families who are looking at floodwaters, but the real story is the coordinated effort, which is heartwarming. It is not just the Federal agencies, like the Corps of Engineers and the Coast Guard; it is not just the State agencies, like the Illinois Emergency Management Agency; it is the local units of government, like the city of Alton and so many other cities, that have come together to coordinate their efforts and to make the best of what they have.

It is also an effort by a lot of charitable organizations. As you might expect, the Red Cross was on the scene almost immediately, and we also know the Salvation Army has been involved as well. They are all doing their part to make sure we work together.

But the one group that should be recognized—they may not have a formal title—are the men and women, the families and community leaders who stepped up and rolled up their sleeves to fill the sandbags to help their neighbors. It is not just a midwestern thing, but it is a midwestern thing, as far as I am concerned. Our people and our families across my State time and again step up to lend a helping hand to one another. In this time of need with this kind of flooding damage in Alton and all across our State, it does my heart proud to see that these folks have once again responded to this call.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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Mr. GARDNER. Madam President, I rise for the swift passage of bipartisan legislation I am leading with Senator KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND known as the Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act.

I will never forget the images of the brave men and women running into danger to save lives during the September 11 terrorist attacks. I never had the privilege or honor of going to New York City prior to September 11, 2001, but I will never forget my first visit after September 11, 2001, going to Ground Zero, watching the firetrucks, with their flag, heading to Ground Zero to continue to work, and now that has become absolutely emblazoned in the minds of the people of this country.

The work they did wasn't just for those in Manhattan who suffered incredible loss but the work they carried

forth for our country—they became symbols of our security, symbols of our freedoms, symbols of our country's willingness, effort, and tenacity to fight back.

This legislation would ensure that all 9/11 first responders and survivors who have been injured by the toxins at Ground Zero would receive their full compensation through the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund now and into the future as more and more become ill with 9/11-related cancers.

When I visited Ground Zero, I will never forget that smell—a burning, acrid odor. These men and women didn't just visit it once but time and again to carry out the cleanup of Ground Zero. Unfortunately, thousands of first responders and survivors, including many who reside in my home State of Colorado, now suffer from illnesses and diseases from the toxins they inhaled day after day during the recovery efforts at Ground Zero.

It is unacceptable for this Congress to fail these heroes and their families. It is unacceptable to fail the families and heroes of September 11. There is no time to waste as Congress debates this issue. More and more people are becoming ill, more and more people are suffering. Today people such as Lou Alvarez came to Washington, DC, postponing a chemotherapy treatment to advocate for his fellow heroes.

The fund expires at the end of this year if we do not act. These men and women have already been forced to reduce their compensation. We have seen a reduction of their compensation for 9/11 first responders due to the impending insolvency.

Jon Stewart, a longtime advocate for the 9/11 responders, testified today before the House Judiciary Committee, expressing the urgency of making sure these first responders receive the care they deserve. He testified before members of the committee in the House about the need to act now because time is of the essence. He said that these men and women "responded in 5 seconds. They did their jobs, with courage, grace, tenacity, humility . . . 18 years later" it is time for Congress to do its job.

That is what I hope my colleagues will do—our job. Pass this important bipartisan legislation, recognizing the service and the sacrifice of these great heroes of 9/11.

Tomorrow the House companion legislation will be marked up in the Judiciary Committee. Congress must do the right thing. The Senate must do our job, and it must act on this legislation. I urge my colleagues to join this legislation to cosponsor the bill, to support this effort, and to support the effort in the House and Senate to swiftly pass this legislation to ensure these heroes receive the care they need and deserve.

We didn't know what was going to happen on September 11, but for the thousands of people involved at Ground Zero, we know what will happen if Congress fails to act. It is unacceptable.