

Republicans were silent when Trump repeatedly accepted Russian dictator Vladimir Putin's brazen denials over American intelligence experts and all of the evidence to the contrary.

They were silent again after the Mueller report's devastating findings of Russian interference. And they were silent when President Trump subsequently said he would gladly accept election help from a foreign power again.

Now look at the current Congress. Several bipartisan bills have been introduced to respond to this Russian threat, including the Election Security Act. This is a critical, comprehensive bill that would provide States with much needed resources and establish a robust Federal effort to protect our democracy.

Unfortunately, Republican Senate Leader McCONNELL is blocking all efforts to bring this important legislation to the floor for a debate and vote. This legislation could thwart Russian interference in the 2020 election. Senator McCONNELL refuses to bring it to the floor.

I end with the questions I have asked before here on the floor: How can the party of Ronald Reagan continue to sit by while this President pursues policies aligned with the former KGB agent, Vladimir Putin? Why didn't the first bills in this new Senate under Republican control deal with this threat to the election process in our democracy? Why isn't the Senate Foreign Relations Committee holding urgent hearings on these stunning dalliances between an American President and a Russian dictator? Why isn't the Senate Foreign Relations Committee moving bipartisan legislation that would protect U.S. membership in NATO?

Quite frankly, we barely do anything in this legislative graveyard of the Senate under Republican control. You would think we would at least focus, on a bipartisan basis, on making certain that the outcome of the next election is not influenced by a foreign power, whether it is Russia or some other malicious force in the world today.

But because it bruises the President's ego and it may invoke a nasty tweet, the Republican-controlled Senate prefers to do nothing. It is time for the Republican majority to stop protecting President Trump at all costs.

There reaches a point when the Senate Republican leadership needs to put the country before fear of the President's tweets.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2019

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, can you hear it? Can you hear the somber notes, the feet shuffling, and the solemn tones? Can you hear it? It is a dirge, a funeral march, and it is the death of a movement—a once proud movement with hundreds of thousands of people gathered on the National Mall. It is the death and it is the last

gasp of a movement in America that was concerned with our national debt.

Today is the final nail in the coffin. The tea party is no more. The budget deal today allows unlimited borrowing for nearly 2 years—unlimited, no limits—and the government will borrow what they wish without limit for 2 years. It abolishes all spending caps. Adoption of this deal marks the death of the tea party movement in America. Fiscal conservatives—those who remain—should be in mourning for Congress. Both parties have deserted you.

The national debt now stands at \$22 trillion. This year, we will add over \$1.2 trillion. We are approaching record deficits, and neither party cares. Both parties have deserted, have absolutely and utterly deserted America and have shown no care and no understanding and no sympathy for the burden of debt they are leaving the taxpayers, the young, the next generation, and the future of our country.

The very underpinnings of our country are being eroded and threatened by this debt. The interest on this debt will be over \$400 billion next year—precisely, \$455 billion. Interest will surpass all welfare spending in the next 2 years. Interest on the debt will surpass defense spending by 2025.

Social Security is \$7 trillion in debt. Medicare is over \$30 trillion in debt. Yet a parade of candidates on national television last night said they want to double and triple the government's expenditures where the government is already trillions of dollars short. Whose fault is this? Both parties.

The media completely doesn't get it. The media says: Oh, there is not enough compromise in Washington. That is exactly the opposite of the truth. There is too much compromise in Washington. There is always an agreement to spend more money. There is always an agreement to spend money we don't have. There is always an agreement to borrow your kids' and your grandkids' money and to put this country further at risk.

Admiral Mullen put it this way. He said the most significant threat to our national security is our debt. Yet all around me on my side of the aisle are those who clamor and say: Our military is hollowed out and can't complete its mission. Well, perhaps the mission is too big for the budget. Maybe it is not a problem of having enough money; maybe it is a problem of making our mission to be everything to everyone around the world, to have spent \$50 billion a year building roads and bridges in Afghanistan for the last 20 years and to continue that forever.

When the President put forward a proposal, a thought that we might try to end and to declare victory in Afghanistan, this body—both parties rose up as one, and the vast majority said it would be precipitous to leave Afghanistan after 19 years.

This is the problem. It isn't acrimony. It isn't both parties fighting each other. It is both parties agreeing

to increase the debt. They increase the debt for different reasons, but the only way they get theirs—"give me mine, give me mine" is what both sides say. The right wants for the military. Yet we spend more on the military than the next 10 countries combined. We spend more on the military—the United States spends more than all of NATO combined. All of the NATO countries combined spend less than we do on the military.

People say we are hollowed out and we can't complete our mission. Well, maybe the mission is too big. It isn't that the budget is too small; it is that the mission is too big. Maybe we don't need to have troops in 50 of 55 African countries. Maybe we need to rethink our mission. Maybe the mission of the military should be to defend our country, not to intervene in every civil war around the world.

Admiral Mullen said the most significant threat to our national security is our debt. Yet we are piling on more debt, saying we need more military. Maybe we need to discuss the mission of our military. We are piling on more debt, some in the name of national security. Yet I think it weakens us with every moment.

The vote today will be on a 2-year debt ceiling with no limits. The details do matter. Raising the debt ceiling with no limits would be like telling your kid: OK, you can have a credit card, but there will be no limits on what you spend. Just spend it on whatever you want, in whatever amount, and in 2 years, I will just pay the bill for you.

Nobody would do that with their family money, and no country should act that way. We can't keep going on like this.

Where are all the fiscal conservatives? What happened to the tea party movement, which was bipartisan and was concerned citizens rising up and saying: I don't want something from government. What I want is a government that is responsible, a government that spends what comes in, a government that doesn't keep borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and putting us further at risk.

What happened to that movement? That movement elected some of these people. You heard these people. Don't you remember, when President Obama was President, the Republicans all clamoring and saying "trillion-dollar deficits" for multiple years. Every year, they would say: President Obama wants to spend and borrow and spend and borrow. I heard it in my State. I heard it from the very people who today will vote for this monstrosity.

Some of them will actually vote for my amendment to give themselves cover. They will say: Oh, yeah, I was for the Paul amendment. But then they are also going to vote for the deal that will bankrupt our country. What happened to these people? They all thought debt was bad when it was President Obama's debt, but they are

not ecumenical, and they are not very much into self-examination. They are not interested in the debt now that Republicans are complicit.

But before we make this about Republicans, remember that there is not a Democrat in Washington who cares about the debt. The difference between the parties is that the Democrats are honest. They are very honest. They don't care about the debt. Look, they are all over the stage, falling all over themselves, trying to give free healthcare to illegal aliens. They are all on the stage trying to talk about giving Medicare for All when we can't even afford the Medicare for Some. So Democrats don't care. The country should know that Democrats do not care about the debt. But here is the problem: The only opposition party we have in the country is the Republican Party, and they don't care either. They just come home, and they are dishonest and tell you they care, and then they vote for a monstrosity.

Today's vote will be a vote for a monstrosity, an abomination, the ability to borrow money for over 2 years until guess what intervenes. Why are we going to wait 2 years with no limits on borrowing? There is this little thing called an election. They don't want to be in public voting to raise the debt ceiling an unlimited amount or a vast amount again, so they are putting it off to beyond the election. Both parties are complicit, though. Nobody wants to vote on this again.

People talk about draining the swamp. You can't drain the swamp unless you are willing to cut the size and scope of government. That is the swamp. The swamp is this morass that is millions of people up here organized to involve themselves in the economy. Most of them could disappear from government, and no one would notice. The only thing you would notice is less money coming to Washington and more money remaining in the States.

It is a little bit of what happened with the tax cut. But in addition to the tax cut returning to people their own money, we should also quit spending money we don't have up here. During the tax cut, I, for one, said: You have to cut spending. I offered amendments during the tax cut to cut spending. Do you know what happened? I got four votes. Four people in the Senate cared about the debt on that particular vote.

After we passed the tax cut, there is a provision that says there will be automatic spending cuts if the taxes were to bring in less revenue. Guess what. I forced a vote to keep that rule in place. I got nine votes because most people don't care.

No Democrat cares about the debt. The Republicans falsely tell you they care, and the vast majority will vote for this monstrosity today.

Today, I will offer an alternative. Some say: Well, you conservatives won't vote to raise the debt ceiling at all, and we will go bankrupt, there will be turmoil in the markets, and it will

be a disaster. So what I am offering for conservatives today is that we will raise the debt ceiling under a couple of conditions. We will raise the debt ceiling if you adopt, in advance, significant spending cuts, caps on spending, and a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

See, here is the road, and here is, I guess, the beginning and the end of the dishonesty around here. If we had a vote today, we would have some people saying: Why don't we vote on the balanced budget amendment?

We all love to vote for it. We don't really mean it. We don't really care about balancing the budget. We are not for it because we are Big Government Republicans. But we love to vote for the balanced budget amendment because I can go home and tell people: Yeah, I voted for the really crazy, monstrous budget deal to expand the debt, but I also voted for the balanced budget amendment.

Well, here is our deal. We don't want to vote on the balanced budget amendment; we want adoption of the balanced budget amendment. So if you will cut spending, if you will cap spending, and if you will pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, I will vote to raise the debt ceiling—but only if those things are done.

People say: Well, if we don't raise the debt ceiling without any reform, the country—the markets will go into turmoil. Well, guess what. We bring in \$3 trillion, and we spend \$4 trillion. What does that mean? We can pay for \$3 trillion on a daily basis without borrowing. So if tomorrow we didn't raise the debt ceiling, what would happen? We would spend \$3 trillion. Every Social Security check could go out, every soldier could be paid, and everybody on Medicare could be taken care of. That is probably about it, to tell you the truth, because we spend too much damn money. We spend money we don't have. But you could provide the essentials to people—Social Security, Medicare, pay our soldiers, and maybe a few other things—if you just spent what came in.

Isn't that what we should do? Isn't that what responsible people do? Does any American family routinely spend a third—25 percent more than comes in? Does anybody spend \$4 for every \$3 that comes in? Nobody does that. Nobody in their right mind does that, but your government does it. And who is at fault? Both parties. They are complicit. They scratch each other's backs. They both are terrible on the deficit. Both parties are bad. Both parties are ruining our country.

My amendment is called cut, cap, and balance—cuts spending, puts caps back in place that they can't exceed, and says that if we vote now on a balanced budget amendment and if it passes and if it is sent to the States, then we would raise the debt ceiling.

Most people around here don't want any linkage. It is not that they will just complain that my budgetary re-

forms are too harsh; they will complain that they don't want any. So there won't be any alternative. There won't be someone saying: Well, those are too much, and we would rather have just a little bit. No, they don't want any restraint. The budget monstrosity, the deal, the abomination we will vote on today will have no limits—no dollar limits.

I was arguing this last week on another particular issue, and from across the country, I got reamed by the left-wing mob who says: Why are you doing this? Why couldn't you do it on another matter?

We do it on every matter. Those of us who are fiscally conservative are saying that we shouldn't spend money we don't have. I am doing it again this week, saying that we should not spend money we don't have, that it is irresponsible, and that we are eroding the very foundation that has made America great.

I will vote against this budget deal. I will present cut, cap, and balance. Cut, cap, and balance is a responsible way to raise the debt ceiling by cutting spending, capping spending, and also passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I hope my colleagues will consider that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I love the month of August, and I think I have always loved the month of August going back to the time when I was a kid because, obviously, growing up in South Dakota, August is a great month of the year. It is hot. There are a lot of activities. Of course, it is the month before or, in some cases, it is the month of returning to school, but it is a time in which there are lots of things going on in my home State of South Dakota, and especially since becoming a Member of Congress, I really love August.

I head back home to South Dakota almost every weekend to meet with South Dakotans, but August is wonderful and different for two reasons. One reason is, August gives us an extended work period, a time when we get a chance to visit the farthest corners of our State, places that might be hard to visit on just a weekend—places such as Bison, Milbank, Clear Lake, Huron, and Mobridge. I get to talk to people who make their living in production agriculture in some of the most rural parts of South Dakota. There is nothing more valuable than getting to talk to these South Dakotans firsthand and to hear the challenges they face and what we can do here in Washington to help out—not to mention how wonderful it is to spend time in these beautiful parts of our State. If you haven't taken in the rugged beauty of the Badlands or the rivers and prairies of Central South Dakota, then you are missing out.

The other thing I like about heading back to South Dakota in August is