

Trump's open solicitation of Russian help in his Presidential campaign and if such cooperation actually ran deeper. While unable to establish a formal conspiracy between the Trump campaign and the Russians, in nearly 200 pages, the Mueller report described "numerous links between the Russian government and the Trump Campaign."

The Mueller report also laid out, in detail, how the Russians brazenly and systematically interfered in our election in 2016 and tried to shape the outcome. You would think that after such a sobering set of findings, any American President would take the matter seriously and reassure the Nation that he really does put America, not a foreign power, first when it comes to our electoral process, but, no, shortly after the Mueller report was released, President Trump told ABC's George Stephanopoulos he would still accept a foreign government's offer to share damaging information about a political rival, echoing similar remarks he made in his original Presidential campaign.

In short, President Trump learned nothing from the experience of the 2016 election. The silence of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle seems to indicate the same.

Now we have reports that President Trump is at it again, trying to strong-arm the leader of Ukraine to join him in attacking one of President Trump's political rivals, Joe Biden. It is not to advance American interests, not to serve the American people, not to help an ally in Ukraine, not to uphold American values but to serve the President's own reelection campaign interest.

Last week, I offered an amendment in the Appropriations Committee to address \$250 million which had been appropriated by Congress to help protect Ukraine from Russian aggression and was never released. Last Thursday, I had this amendment coming before the committee, and it basically said to the administration: If you don't release the money we have appropriated, you are going to pay a price for it.

Occasionally, that is all you can do as a Member of Congress to get money spent that was appropriated and approved by the President. It was a curiosity. Why in the world were we holding back \$250 million that was supposed to help the Ukrainian people stop the aggression of Vladimir Putin?

I went to the committee hearing on Thursday morning. Before it started, one of my staff members said: Oh, the Trump administration released the money last night.

Last night? Why did they wait until 2 weeks before the end of the fiscal year to release the money?

Oh, they were reviewing this to determine whether there was any problem with releasing the money to Ukraine.

It was a curious answer. It didn't make much sense. The President had signed this appropriations bill.

For months, as President Trump, through his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani, tried to pressure Ukrainian President Zelensky to further his political agenda, the money that was supposed to go to Ukraine was withheld.

We learned in this morning's Washington Post the President had instructed his Chief of Staff to notify the appropriate agencies to withhold the money while he bargained with Zelensky over salacious, negative information about Joseph Biden and his family.

Now we are learning there was a whistleblower complaint, reportedly about the same issue. Apparently, someone in the administration who learned what President Trump was trying to do in strong-arming Ukrainian President Zelensky decided it overstepped the bounds and needed to be reported on officially. The congressional Intelligence Committees that get access to the information provided by this whistleblower are still waiting for that information—information the Trump-appointed inspector general for the intelligence community, Michael Atkinson, a Trump appointee, has determined to be credible and urgent. In other words, something happened at the highest levels of our government which led a professional in the intelligence agency, the inspector general, to make a whistleblower complaint for the record.

The law requires that complaint to be shared with committees of Congress. It wasn't. It turns out that the Attorney General of the United States, William Barr, may have played some role in diverting that from its ordinary statutory course. The President may not want anyone to see it, but the law is clear and must be respected: This information in the whistleblower complaint must be transmitted to Congress.

Is there anyone in the Senate, anyone who took the oath to protect the Nation against enemies foreign and domestic, who thinks any of us, regardless of political party, should solicit help from a foreign power to make sure we get elected or reelected?

This abdication of responsibility by the other party is remarkable. I want to salute one Senator, and I hesitate to mention any direct reference to him, but one Senator on the Republican side who has spoken out. He understands the gravity of the situation, the constitutional issues at stake in this debate, and the fact that, ultimately, history must stand in judgment of all of us of whether we have spoken up.

If this President of the United States can attempt to extort a foreign leader to withhold security funds that would have been given by the United States to his country in order to pursue and promote his own political agenda, we have reached a new low in the United States. If this whistleblower's claim goes into detail, it is only right and appropriate, under the statute, that this information be shared with the appro-

priate committees of the U.S. Senate and House. The whistleblower's claim needs to be released to the appropriate congressional committees and evaluated according to the law, and congressional Republicans—House and Senate—need to make it clear once and for all that no President—not this President, no President—can solicit or strong-arm a foreign country to further his own campaign. That is unacceptable under the Constitution of the United States, which I remind my colleagues we are sworn to uphold and defend.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF DANIEL HABIB JORJANI

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, over the past 2½ years, we have seen a remarkable pattern emerge in the types of people Donald Trump nominates to serve in his administration. His nominees have extensive conflicts of interest. They work to advance the interest of foreign clients, financial patrons, or other special interests. In doing so, they are actively hostile to the very departments in which they have been nominated to serve.

Daniel Jorjani—the President's nominee to serve as Solicitor of the Department of the Interior—is a classic example of this pattern. The DOI Solicitor is a critically important position in the Department. In addition to being the chief legal adviser to the Secretary, the Solicitor is intimately involved in developing the legal justifications for Department policies, defending DOI positions in court, and overseeing compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA.

Given the influence the Department's Solicitor has on issues, such as the implementation of the Endangered Species Act, stewardship of public lands, and holding companies accountable for their impacts on the environment, it is essential that whoever occupies this job can execute his or her duties in a manner that upholds the public trust.

With the nomination of Daniel Jorjani, Donald Trump has once again shown that he prioritizes exploiting our environment for the benefit of fossil fuel companies over the very real interests of the American people and protecting our environment.

Prior to joining the Trump administration, Mr. Jorjani spent 7 years working in organizations throughout the Koch brothers' sprawling empire. In positions such as the general counsel of Freedom Partners, Mr. Jorjani assisted the Koch brothers in pursuing a relentlessly pro-fossil fuel agenda. He fought against the Obama administration's actions to combat climate change and protect the environment.

It was with precisely this experience in mind that Donald Trump appointed Mr. Jorjani as the Principal Deputy Solicitor and Acting Solicitor of DOI in 2017. During his tenure in these roles,

which did not require Senate confirmation, Mr. Jorjani wasted little time before mounting a full frontal assault on Obama-era environmental regulations, to the delight of his former patrons. Of the eight Solicitor's legal opinions that Mr. Jorjani authored, seven roll back Obama-era environmental regulations.

Let me focus on one example that certainly sticks out. In a stunning reversal of a 2017 opinion issued by then-Solicitor Hilary Tompkins, Mr. Jorjani pushed to shield companies from liability for killing birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act as long as it was not the company's intended action.

That is like saying BP shouldn't have to pay to clean up the Deepwater Horizon oilspill because they didn't intend to release nearly 5 million barrels—200 million gallons—of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Clearly, companies should not be shielded from their negligence.

Mr. Jorjani's reversal of the opinion overturned existing Department enforcement practices that had been in place for the past 40 years. The oil and gas industry had been complaining about this rule for years precisely because it held them accountable for their actions.

When I asked Mr. Jorjani directly at his confirmation hearing about which industry benefited most from this reversal decision of his, he claimed: "I'm not aware of any particular industry that benefits from this."

Who is he trying to kid? My reaction to Mr. Jorjani's shibai—or BS—answer is that the oil and gas industries are the biggest beneficiaries. He knew it, and I knew it.

Mr. Jorjani's actions are particularly alarming in light of a new study that found that North America has lost 3 billion birds—nearly 30 percent of our total bird population—in the past 50 years.

In normal times, we expect leaders of the Interior Department to pursue policies to mitigate the harm being done to our ecosystems and environment, not to do things that will actually make big problems even worse. But these are not normal times.

Instead, we have yet another Trump nominee with extensive conflicts of interest, pursuing policies that help his former employers in a manner that is fundamentally hostile to the Department in which he or she serves.

Fitting the Trump administration's normal pattern of corruption should be more than enough to deny him confirmation to this critical job, but Mr. Jorjani—just like his boss, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt—is also currently under investigation by the DOI inspector general.

Mr. Jorjani is under investigation for potential misconduct related to his management of the Department's compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, and its so-called supplemental review policy.

Under this policy, political appointees at the Department are noti-

fied about the public release of any documents containing their names or email addresses. This policy can be problematic even in normal times. It could result in political interference in the FOIA process to delay the release of potentially damaging information, but DOI allegedly has an additional internal review policy that goes even further. It allows Mr. Jorjani and the Department's Deputy Chief of Staff 5 days before release to review requested records that involve senior staff in the Secretary's office. This review process not only opens up the possibility for inappropriate delays but also allows for willful and blatant withholding of important information the public has requested.

In response to questions at his confirmation hearing and questions for the record, Mr. Jorjani asserted that he "typically did not review records prior to their release under the FOIA." However, internal documents released by the DOI paint a very different picture, one in which Mr. Jorjani was regularly involved in reviewing FOIA documents.

At best, Mr. Jorjani was not forthcoming or candid. In fact, it appeared that he lied under oath.

With a position as important as this one, the American people deserve, at the very least, an ethical Solicitor devoted to the mission of the Department, one who is not compromised by or catering to the narrow interests of his former employers or one who doesn't tell his staff, as Mr. Jorjani told his staff, that "at the end of the day our job is to protect the Secretary." Protecting the Secretary is nowhere in Mr. Jorjani's job description. He is yet another Trump nominee who should not be confirmed by the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I recognize the Senator from Oregon.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to propound a unanimous consent request. I think colleagues know we have run a little bit behind. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Iowa be recognized next for her remarks and that I be recognized to close the debate on Mr. Jorjani and be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes. I think we would end up being about 10 minutes late or thereabouts, between 20 of and quarter of.

I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak for up to 15 minutes after the Senator from Iowa has finished her remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, first, I would like to thank my colleague from Oregon. I appreciate that very much.

NO BUDGET NO RECESS ACT AND END-OF-YEAR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT

Mr. President, 'tis the season in Washington. Government agencies are going on their "Christmas in Sep-

tember, use-it-or-lose-it" shopping spree. If not spent by midnight on September 30, leftover dollars expire and can no longer be used.

Rather than returning the money to taxpayers, binge-buying bureaucrats are wasting billions of taxpayer dollars needlessly. Frankly, folks, this is Washington's most notorious tradition at the end of our fiscal year.

Let me tell you, folks, Iowans and hard-working folks across the country really should be appalled by many of the last-minute purchases our tax dollars are paying for. I will just give you some examples.

There was \$4.6 million spent on lobster tail and crab; \$2.1 million spent on games, toys, and wheeled goods; over \$53,000 on china and tableware; more than \$40,000 on clocks; and nearly \$12,000 for a commercial foosball table. Yes, that is right, folks, a commercial foosball table, 12,000 of your dollars.

What are we, as Congress, doing about this wasteful spending? Nada, nothing. Congress is sitting idly by, letting Washington bureaucrats waste the hard-earned dollars of folks in my home State of Iowa.

Failing to pass the bills necessary to fund the government on time makes it difficult for agencies to thoughtfully plan and allocate billions of dollars. That is why I fought hard to make sure Congress completes its job of appropriating and budgeting on time.

Through my No Budget No Recess Act, Members of Congress would be prohibited from leaving Washington if we fail to pass a budget by April 15 or if we fail to approve regular spending bills by August 1.

The way we are doing business is incentivizing Federal agencies to rush and spend the rest of their money as quickly as possible, and it makes it all the more likely that they will waste money on unnecessary goods and services.

As Iowa taxpayers know, it is never smart to rush into a big purchase. Unfortunately, it seems Washington bureaucrats don't agree, especially when it is the tax dollars of hard-working Americans that they are dealing with.

Washington's spending disorder gets more expensive every year. The \$97 billion rung up in September 2018 is 15 percent more than was spent the same month the previous year and a staggering 39 percent more than that time in 2015. But if the Federal agencies followed the President's directive to trim their budgets by 5 percent, an easy place to start is simply by cutting the dollars they have been unable to spend.

Federal agencies end every year with leftover money in their budgets. This year, it is estimated the government will end up with more than \$825 billion in unspent funds that have not been committed by contract or otherwise obligated to be spent. Last year's \$804 billion budget deficit could have been wiped out and turned into a surplus if the unobligated balance being held in the Federal coffers had been canceled.