

swing States until way after the election. They could do the same thing on the conservative side of the aisle.

That is why I am simply asking for some solution, because one time it is going to be one side, and the next time it will be the other. Why would the people in this Chamber let this go on? Why would we do that? We have sworn and taken an oath—an obligation—to stand up for our country. That is what this is about.

It continues. Intelligence officials are once again sounding the alarm that adversaries are using social media to undermine the upcoming elections. Just yesterday, Facebook announced that it removed a network of Russian-backed accounts posing as locals weighing in on political issues in swing States. It never ends. Russia has a playbook, and they are using it to attack us. We have to stop them. How do we do that? Well, I have a very good solution. It is not the only solution. There are a lot of other bills we can do too.

But this is called the Honest Ads Act, which I am leading with Senator GRAHAM. I want to thank Senator WARNER for all the work he did on this bill as well. The goal is simple: Bring our laws into the 21st century to ensure that voters know who is paying to influence our political system. Right now, the political ads that are sold on TV, radio, and newspapers are disclosed so that the public knows what they are. They are actually kept in an archive so campaigns and reporters can go over and see what they are. They can actually figure out what this ad is and why somebody was putting this ad against me. I believe in the competitiveness of our election system, and if you disclose things, then, you are going to get more information about what is wrong with those things.

The ads also have to say who paid for them. That is why you see those little disclaimers at the bottom or you see elected officials or their challengers saying who paid for this ad: My name is this; I paid for this ad. That is what that is.

Guess what. If those things go on radio, TV, or newspaper, you have to follow all those rules. If they end up on Facebook or Twitter or another large social media platform, there are no rules in play. Sure, a few of those companies right now are voluntarily disclosing it, but there are no actual rules in place about how it should be done.

When I asked them why they wouldn't favor the bill, some of them have since changed their minds and do favor it, but when I asked at the beginning, they said they couldn't figure out what an issue of Federal legislative importance is. That is what the standard is. It is about candidate ads and the issue ads that you see on TV that bug you all the time. When asked about ads and why they couldn't do it, they said they couldn't figure out what that was. I said: Really? My radio station in Deep River Falls, MN, can figure it out.

These are some of the biggest companies in the world. Please tell me you don't have the expertise to figure that out.

That is why it is important that we pass this bill. It is about issue ads, and it is also about candidate ads. All it does is this. As we look at where the money is going to go in advertising, in the last 2016 Presidential election, \$1.4 billion was spent online on these kinds of ads. It is supposed to go to \$3 billion or \$4 billion in 2020, and there are no rules of the road. It is not only unfair, but it is criminal if this continues.

It is so easy to do. This is something we could fix right away. This is why John McCain led this bill with me. When we introduced it, he said:

I have long fought to increase transparency and end the corrupting influence of special interests in political campaigns, and I am confident the Honest Ads Act will modernize existing law to safeguard the integrity of our election system.

This Congress, as I mentioned, Senator GRAHAM took his place. It is time to get this done. There are many other bills that I will come back and discuss in the next few weeks that would help on foreign influence in our elections, but, today, I want to focus on this one because election security is national security, and it is well past time that we take action. The American people should expect nothing less from us. We should be able to get this done.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1356

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be discharged from further consideration of S. 1356 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senate majority whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there are Members who object to this. They can't be here to object on their own behalf. I object on their behalf.

I say to the Senator from Minnesota that, like her, I also want to do everything we can to ensure that our elections are fair and transparent in this country. I think there are a number of solutions, as she pointed out, that are out there. I think there is a lot of good work that is being done and can be done, hopefully, on a bipartisan basis. As a former chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, I have worked with the Senator from Minnesota on a number of issues where we have been able to fashion solutions that are bipartisan in nature. I suspect work on this will continue.

As I mentioned, we have a couple of Members on our side who do have objections to the bill in its current form or the process of trying to do it this way. I do think there is a way in which we can come together and work toward solutions that will help do what I think

all of us have as an objective, and that is to keep our election process in this country fair and transparent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I appreciate the words from my colleague from South Dakota. I point out that the act is a bipartisan bill, with the other cosponsor being the Republican chair of the Judiciary Committee, and I think we should be focused on election security instead of protecting these social media companies. I think we should be protecting the American people.

We need to be a united front. I appreciate his words, and I look forward to working with him to get this bill to the floor.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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.

ELECTION SECURITY ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Mueller report made crystal clear that the Russian Government interfered in the Presidential election of the United States of America in the year 2016. They called it a "sweeping and systematic fashion" of interference.

I know this better than some because, in my home State of Illinois, the Russian intelligence service literally hacked into our State Board of Elections' voter file and gained access to a database containing information on millions of voters in my State. Then the Russians extracted the data on thousands of those voters. They also targeted other State election authorities, county governments, and election equipment and technology vendors.

Federal law enforcement and intelligence officers have repeatedly warned us that these interference efforts will continue into the election of 2020. In fact, former KGB Agent Vladimir Putin recently mocked us and openly joked that Russia would definitely interfere again in the U.S. elections. Congress cannot sit back and ignore this threat. We must take action to help State and local election officials prepare for the 2020 elections and those beyond.

I am pleased that the leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, of Kentucky, finally relented on his opposition to any further funding to assist State and local election officials with election security efforts. Yet the \$250 million included in the fiscal year 2020 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill is clearly inadequate. We need to boldly invest in our election security. It is literally the cornerstone of our democracy, and we need to provide sustained funding to State and local election officials so they may respond

to these threats that are far beyond any State's capacity to deal with.

There are 40 of us who cosponsored the Election Security Act that Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR, of Minnesota, introduced in May. I was proud to join her as one of the original cosponsors.

The legislation would provide critical resources to election officials through an initial \$1 billion investment in our election infrastructure, followed by \$175 million every 2 years for infrastructure maintenance. It would also require the use of voter-verified paper ballots, strengthen the Federal response to election interference, and establish accountability measures for election technology vendors.

Let me bring this down to Earth in simple words. If we cannot trust the outcome of an election to accurately reflect the feelings of those in America, we have lost the cornerstone of our democracy. There are nations, including Russia, that have proven they are doing everything in their power to stop us from having safe, accurate election counts.

The question for this Senate and for this Congress is, Do we care? Do we care enough to spend the resources so our States can protect the integrity of voters? I am not just talking about blue States from the Democratic side of the aisle. Every State, red and blue alike, would benefit from this legislation. If the Republicans want to demonstrate that they are joining us in putting country over party, they should join us today and protect our democracy by passing this legislation.

I have been asked to make a unanimous consent request at this point before I finish my remarks, and I thank the Senator from Louisiana for being on the floor.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1540

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be discharged from further consideration of S. 1540, the Election Security Act; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object and with all of the respect I can muster, this bill has more red flags than the Chinese Embassy. Despite my great admiration for the senior Senator from Illinois, I am objecting for three reasons.

The first reason I can best explain by telling you a story.

An oilman was talking to his banker one day, and the banker said: Mr. Oilman, you know, the bank loaned you \$1 million to rework all of your old oil wells, and they went dry.

The oilman said: It could have been worse.

The banker said to the oilman: Mr. Oilman, we loaned you a second \$1 mil-

lion to drill brandnew wells, and they all went dry. What do you say about that?

The oilman said: It could have been worse.

Then the banker said to the oilman: Our bank loaned you a third \$1 million to buy new drilling equipment, and it all broke down. What do you say about that?

The oilman said: It could have been worse.

The banker was now very upset. He said: What do you mean it could have been worse? We loaned you \$3 million, and you lost all of it. What do you mean it could have been worse?

The oilman said: It could have been my money.

The cost of this bill is \$1 billion—nine zeros. If I started counting to a billion right now by one numeral a second, I wouldn't finish until 2051. I would be dead as a doornail. I wouldn't make it. A billion is a lot. We toss around "a billion" these days like it was a nickel. A billion seconds ago, it was 1986. Ronald Reagan was President. That is how much a billion is. A billion minutes ago, the Romans were conquering Mesopotamia. As I made the point the other day on the Senate floor, a billion hours ago, the Neanderthals were roaming the Earth. A billion is a lot.

We have a \$22 trillion deficit—12 zeros. We have to pay this money back. I am running out of space, and we are probably going to run out of digits if we keep borrowing.

My first concern is the money. Now, if we had not given any money to our colleagues at the State level, that would have been one thing. Yet, as my good friend knows, 2 years ago, we gave the States \$380 million to combat election fraud. They haven't even spent it all yet. So, yes, I have concerns about the money.

Point No. 2, we did have problems in 2016, and I join the senior Senator in wanting to do everything we possibly can to keep it from happening again, which we did in 2018. We all had a classified briefing down in our room. I don't know the particular name of it, but it is in the Capitol Visitor Center. It is classified. You have to leave your phone and your iPad outside. We had the Director of National Intelligence there and the FBI Director, and I think we had every general there from the Western Hemisphere. We went over the 2018 elections. They went off without a hitch.

Have you read any articles about our having problems in 2018 like we had in 2016? No. Do you think if we had problems in 2018 that the members of our press would have pounced on it like a ninja? Yes. Yet you haven't seen those articles because 2018 went off without a hitch. This was, in part, because we gave the States \$380 million to solve the problem, and they have not spent it all. So a reasonable person would wonder why we would want to give them another \$1 billion of American taxpayer money at this juncture.

We also asked the Director of National Intelligence, the FBI, and every general who was there: Are you ready for 2020? Every single one of them said, categorically, unequivocally, unconditionally, yes. Every single Senator, both my Republican friends and my Democratic friends, walked out of that classified hearing impressed.

The third reason I, regretfully, have to object to this bill—and I am not ascribing this intention to the Senator from Illinois. I am not—is that some of my friends on Capitol Hill would like nothing better than to take over elections in America, to have our election system federalized. Right now, we don't have one election system; we have 50 election systems. Every State runs its elections its own way, usually by the Secretary of State. Now, I believe that is a matter of federalism. I don't see anywhere in the U.S. Constitution or in the Federalist Papers where it reads the U.S. Government ought to be running elections for States.

No. 2, our States do a great job. Yes, we had a lot of activity on Facebook and Google and within other aspects of social media, but we haven't heard one allegation—or at least any proof of an allegation—that any votes were stolen in 2016, much less in 2018. That is because our Secretaries of State did a good job. It is also safer to have every Secretary of State and every State in charge of its own election system because, if a foreign government wants to hack your system, it has to go to 50 different States. It has to do it 50 times. If we nationalize elections—yet again, give the Federal Government more power—all a foreign national has to do is to hack one system.

Again, I am not ascribing this motive or this intent to my good friend from Illinois. I am not. Yet there are some who would like nothing better than to nationalize State elections and have them run by the Federal Government. Then the Federal Government could tell the States what to do—what kinds of machines to use, whether they need paper ballots, how to order the ballots. If they have electric machines and one has to walk into a booth, the Federal Government could tell the States what kinds of and what color of curtains they would have to have. Then they would have a Federal agency get involved, and it would start promulgating regulations. Before you would know it, casting a vote would be like building a bridge.

It is a matter of federalism. Those who disagree with me will say: Oh, KENNEDY. You are exaggerating. This bill doesn't do that. It doesn't federalize elections.

Yes, it does.

Do you know how we federalize things around here? We get the object of the federalization hooked on the money. Those who want the Federal Government to run everything never go right at it. They sneak up on them. We say we are going to give them \$380