

the Kurds have proven they are good fighters.

The Kurds would probably have to acknowledge there is a greater Syria and that they are part of it. If they want to break off from Syria, there will be continual war. If they are able to make an arrangement with Assad, there is a chance that there could be an oil-sharing arrangement like we have in Iraq.

The bottom line is, we sometimes see the world in black-and-white terms and think we can get Thomas Jefferson in Syria or in Libya or in Iraq, but what happens is, time and time again, we topple a dictator, we get chaos, we get more terrorism. ISIS sprang out of the vacuum that was Iraq after a government that was incapable of doing it after we get rid of the same. The same thing happened when we got rid of Qadhafi in Libya. I think we need to rethink our approach to the Middle East.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I will not belabor the point. I know my friend from Connecticut is here to raise another issue.

I don't agree with the analysis of the Senator from Kentucky. I hope he proves to be right. I would agree with him; sometimes our notion that we are going to find Thomas Jefferson to rebuild these countries has not proven to be the case.

This legislation I am proposing is not broad policy changing; it is simply saying let's look at a very limited universe of individuals who 2 weeks ago were working with the American military.

My fear is, at least in terms of how those translators and their families will be viewed by both the Turks and by the Assad forces, that they will not be viewed as Thomas Jeffersons, but they will be viewed as Benedict Arnolds, and my fear is their fate will be on our hands.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1247

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Virginia for his advocacy on this critical measure, and I support him on it and also for his advocacy on the FIRE Act. It is very similar to the measure on which I am going to ask for unanimous consent. He has done wonderful and dedicated work on both measures.

Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1247; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered 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 Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I am concerned

that this bill would put an undue burden on anybody who decided to run for office in the sense that you would be burdened with trying to understand everyone you talk to anywhere in the United States—whether or not they are an agent of a foreign government or an agent of a foreign principle, such as a foreign company.

For example, I might run into Hunter Biden in the airport. I know he is an American citizen, but this bill doesn't prevent American citizens from being an agent of a foreign principle. Hunter Biden also worked for a Ukrainian oligarch and a company with mysterious origins that may well have something to do with our foreign policy.

So if I meet Hunter Biden, I am concerned that now it may be against the law or I could be reprimanded or fined by the FEC for talking to Hunter Biden.

The same might also exist—I enjoy going to the Indian New Year in Louisville, and I sometimes see 5,000 to 6,000 Indian Americans, but I can't tell you how many of them are brand new to the country, what their visa status is, whether they have a relative from government there who might come up to me.

So I think we need to be very careful about putting forward law, particularly by unanimous consent, that hasn't been scrutinized and might end up having a burden that we don't really agree with.

There has been a certain degree of hysteria over the Russian thing. Some on the other side of the aisle can't get over they lost the Presidential election, and so they continue to blame the Russians for losing the election.

It is so bad that their candidate from the last election, Hillary Clinton, had to go after TULSI GABBARD, a Democratic Member of the Congress, a sitting Congresswoman, the first female combat veteran to run for President, and she has been labeled by Hillary Clinton a Russian asset.

So you can see that the hysteria over Russia is a little bit concerning; that we may be going too far in this hysteria.

Then, once we apply this to the world, is there going to be a hesitancy to talk to someone who looks different than you, who dresses different than you, who has a different color skin than yours because you are concerned they might be from a foreign country?

So I think this would have the ability of stifling speech—stifling political speech—and I think it is a reactionary way to look at things, and it really fits in with this unseemliness of Hillary Clinton's thinking everybody is a Russian agent to many of the Democrats saying: Donald Trump is a Russian agent.

We spent \$35 million on this notion. This was probably a notion promulgated by people within the intelligence community who already hated Donald Trump before he was elected. I hope we get to the bottom of this, but I am not

about to allow, by unanimous consent, an attempt to politicize our election process and make it so absurd that you would have to worry about whom you talk to as you travel the country.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I truly regret the objection by my colleague. I regret even more the reasons for his objection, characterizing the threat of Russia interference as hysteria.

Well, I suggest that my friend from Kentucky spend a little bit of time—it will not take a lot—with members of the intelligence community, any member of the intelligence community, all the members of the intelligence community, who agree unanimously that the threat of Russian interference is real. In fact, it is ongoing.

That is the warning we have received from the CIA, the Director of National Intelligence, and, most pointedly, from the Director of the FBI. They have warned us, in no uncertain terms, that the Russians are interfering now, spreading disinformation, creating false accounts and sites and that they are planning to do it even more intensely. It is not only the Russians but other nations.

That was the warning of Robert Mueller when he said that the Russians' interference in our last election was sweeping and systematic and that they were doing it again and we need to pay attention to it.

That is exactly what my colleagues and I have been doing for the past few days, raising for floor consideration various election securities bills. We have done it not only in the last few days but for months—the PAVE Act, the Honest Ads Act, the SHIELD Act, but my colleague from Kentucky says it is hysteria.

Well, it is a well-founded fear based on fact. As one of our former colleagues, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, once said: People are entitled to their own opinions; they are not entitled to their own facts. The facts here are indisputable, set forth in numbing detail by the Mueller report but also by the intelligence community, independently, in the hearings that have been conducted by various of our committees, in open and public, in Armed Services and Judiciary, and also behind closed doors. Some of them the intelligence community—which produced a report, most recently by the Senate Intelligence Committee, a bipartisan report, showing how the Russians scan every single State to penetrate them, seeking to disrupt them, and that is an absolutely chilling fact-based, evidence-founded prospect that we need to counter, and that is the reason my colleagues and I have come to the floor for these measures. A number of them I have been proud to cosponsor and helped to lead.

The one that brings me here now is the Duty to Report Act, S. 1247, and it

very simply says there is a duty to report. If there is an illegal offer of assistance, if anyone knows of an illegal acceptance of assistance from a foreign leader or foreign national or foreign government, there is a duty to tell the FBI or some other law enforcement official.

The plain fact is our elections are under attack, and 2016 was only a dress rehearsal.

Just this week, talk about hysteria, Facebook banned dozens of fake Russian and Iranian accounts attempting to spread misinformation and disinformation to Americans—the purpose: to disrupt the 2020 election.

It isn't necessarily an ad for one candidate or another. It may be an ad that seeks to suppress the vote. The point is, that attack will continue, and opposition to it is based on hysteria about the potential political implications.

What saddens and angers me is that our Commander in Chief—not just some of our colleagues—refuses to believe that our elections were attacked and will be again. He is actively working to undermine our democracy.

The President's attempts to invite a foreign leader, the Ukrainian President, to interfere in our democratic elections was a betrayal of his oath of office and an abuse of power. It is an impeachable offense. But it will occur again by others, as well as him, if we do not pass measures like the Duty to Report Act.

It started with a whistleblower complaint, but now we have call notes between the President and Ukraine President Zelensky, the corroborating statements of multiple witnesses in the government, and President Trump's own statements—his own words—on live television, admitting that he did this. The transcript of his call chillingly shows how he literally pressured and extorted the Ukrainian President, using the threat of a cut or elimination of military aid vital to Ukrainian lives and Ukrainian defense against an ongoing Russian attack, not to mention the visit to the White House, also used as leverage with these 10 powerful words: "I would like you to do us a favor though." The favor was digging dirt on a political opponent through a full investigation to favor himself over that opponent.

The invitation to interfere in our elections goes to the core of our democratic institutions. It is literally condoning and, in fact, inviting and encouraging an attack on our democratic institution, and the President has said, when he was asked, that if he were offered foreign assistance, he would take it. His son, during the last campaign, was offered Russian assistance, and his response was: "I love it."

That is not the appropriate response for the offer of an illegal act of assistance. It should be to go to the FBI or another law enforcement agency.

Every Republican should be asked to answer the question—in fact, forced to answer this question: Is it acceptable

to solicit or accept the assistance of a foreign power to win an election?

We cannot allow this kind of practice to become the new normal. It is already illegal to accept or solicit such an assistance from a foreign government or leader, and what we want to do is make it illegal to fail to report it.

Finally, as for my colleagues' objection that it would inhibit somehow an active and honest campaign, someone who has reason to know that there is an illegal offer of assistance and someone who knows that that assistance is being solicited by his or her campaign or a member of their family, certainly, should feel a duty to report as a matter of simple patriotism and moral obligation, not to mention legal responsibility.

With the 2020 Presidential election looming, we must stop this kind of foreign interference. We must take active and effective measures against it. We must ensure that the American people—not Russia or China or Iran, and they are all gunning for our democratic institution—decide who the leaders of this country will be and what direction our democracy will take.

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

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

#### VOTE ON WALKER NOMINATION

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to commence with the prearranged vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Walker nomination?

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 333 Ex.]

#### YEAS—50

Alexander	Ernst	Portman
Barrasso	Fischer	Risch
Blackburn	Gardner	Roberts
Blunt	Graham	Romney
Boozman	Grassley	Rounds
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	McSally	Toomey
Cruz	Murkowski	Wicker
Daines	Paul	Young
Enzi	Perdue	

#### NAYS—41

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Jones	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Sinema
Carper	Leahy	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Markey	Tester
Duckworth	Menendez	Udall
Durbin	Merkley	Van Hollen
Feinstein	Murphy	Warner
Gillibrand	Murray	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	

#### NOT VOTING—9

Booker	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Coons	Isakson	Warren
Harris	Moran	Whitehouse

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The Senator from Tennessee.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator for Maryland.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 2486

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I am on the Senate floor now, where in a moment I will be asking for unanimous consent for the Senate to take up and vote on a House-passed bill that would provide full mandatory funding for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

The reason I am here is that the authority for this mandatory spending expired 24 days ago, and we have it within our power right now to remedy that situation. We can take up a vote on what is called the FUTURE Act. We have a bipartisan Senate bill that is