

percent of counties have only one insurer this year in 2017. Forty-nine percent of our counties, nearly half the counties in Kentucky, have only one insurer to choose from, and of course having one option is really no choice at all. It is a harsh reality facing more and more Americans, and these ObamaCare failures have real consequences for the men and women whom we all represent.

As one of our Democratic friends commented just last week on news that his State will be left with only a single insurer next year under ObamaCare, "This will mean that more than 12,000 Delawareans will have to find a new insurance plan and [that] our hard-working families will have fewer options and harder choices to make about their health insurance coverage."

Can our Democratic colleagues who promised more choice under ObamaCare really be OK with the continuing failures of ObamaCare?

The status quo under ObamaCare is simply unsustainable and unacceptable. That is why the entire Senate Republican conference is working together on the best way forward to bring much needed relief to the families who have been left behind by ObamaCare's continuing failures.

I hope our Democratic colleagues will join us in working on this. They just sent me a letter last week where they acknowledged that ObamaCare hasn't lived up to its promises and where they effectively conceded that the status quo is unsustainable. I hope it means they are finally ready to join us in moving away from ObamaCare and supporting smarter healthcare policies. After years of defending a system that isn't working for far too many Americans, it is time that Senate Democrats finally face the reality of this flawed ObamaCare law.

The failures of ObamaCare aren't just isolated to one region of the country either. They are affecting people from the east coast to the west coast, from the North to the South, and things are likely to get even worse, unless we work to finally move beyond the failures of this law.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive ses-

sion to resume consideration of the Rosen nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey A. Rosen, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The assistant Democratic leader.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I had a meeting last week in Illinois, and I asked hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, pediatricians, those who are in the substance abuse treatment area, what they thought of the Republican bill. It was all Republicans who passed the healthcare finance act, whatever the name of it is—their version of the healthcare system that they are calling for reform in the House of Representatives. It was interesting. They were unanimously opposed to it, all of them—hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, pediatricians, across the board.

Why would all the medical providers in my State be opposed to the Republican plan that just passed the House of Representatives? Well, because they have read it. Here is what they found. It threatens the survival of downstate and inner city hospitals. The Illinois Hospital Association came out against the Republican plan and said we could lose 60,000 jobs in Illinois, and we could see cutbacks in services in our hospitals.

I know the Acting President pro tempore from the State of Oklahoma knows what rural hospitals mean to these small towns. It is not only life and death to have access to quality healthcare, they are some of the best paying jobs in town. The thought that those hospitals are going to see services cut back, people laid off is worth sitting up and taking notice.

They also are worried because the Congressional Budget Office never gave an analysis of the Republican plan that passed the House of Representatives. That is unheard of. When we passed the Affordable Care Act in the U.S. Senate, we waited week after weary week for the Congressional Budget Office to analyze each of the major changes. We didn't want to make a mistake, and we felt obligated to tell the American people what we were doing to the healthcare system, which is one-sixth of the national economy.

Somehow the Republican leaders in the House of Representatives paid no attention to that and passed a bill without a Congressional Budget Office analysis. Possibly it is because the first version of that bill, which was analyzed by the CBO, found that it was devastating. Twenty-four million Americans would lose their health insurance under the Republican plan in its first phase. Twenty-four million Americans lose their health insurance.

In Illinois, 1 million people—in a State of 12½ million people, 1 million

people living in my State would have lost their health insurance coverage by the plan proposed initially by the Republicans in the House, and we also know it would shorten the lifespan of Medicare, for one thing. We know it allowed for waivers by Governors to eliminate what they call nonessential services in health insurance.

One of them hits close to home. I can remember as a new Senator coming to the floor and watching Paul Wellstone, who used to be at that desk, and Pete Domenici, who used to be at that desk, get up on a bipartisan basis and argue again and again that every health insurance plan in America should cover mental illness and substance abuse treatment. It seems so obvious, and yet they had to fight the insurance industry for years before we finally achieved it. Now when you buy health insurance in America, it covers mental illness and substance abuse treatment. Thank goodness. We need it. We desperately need it. Yet that becomes one of the nonessential elements in the Republican analysis of health insurance.

What are they thinking? Have they listened or read recently about the opioid and heroin crisis in America? I have sat at tables with victims, addicts who, thank goodness, had an intervention, had an opportunity, and now can speak of their addiction in the past tense.

These are amazing young people whose lives were compromised and threatened because of addiction. How did they turn the corner? They turned the corner because of loving families, their personal determination, and the availability of medical treatment under their health insurance plans.

Now the Republicans are arguing in the House of Representatives that we don't need that coverage, we don't need that protection. We do now more than ever.

When I hear the Republican leader come to the floor and criticize the Affordable Care Act, I basically have to ask him, Is this a problem that is of your own creation?

The Republicans, including the leader, have refused to sit down with Democrats and work on a bipartisan solution. In fact, when the Republican leader sat down to determine how the Senate would respond to the House action, he put together a group of, I believe, 12 Republican Senators—no Democrats allowed—to sit down and write the alternative. That is not a good way to start this.

What we ought to do is to say, first, we are not going to repeal the Affordable Care Act; we are going to improve it, and we will do it on a bipartisan basis. If the majority leader wants to suggest that, I would like to be part of it. Many Democrats would like to be part of it. Take repeal off the table before the conversation on repair begins. I think that is essential. Let's make sure that within health insurance in America we have some basics.

First, if you have a preexisting condition, you shouldn't be disqualified from

health insurance or you shouldn't have to pay twice the premiums. That is something that is now built into the law that the Republicans want to repeal. Well, I want to make sure that preexisting conditions are protected.

As I have said on the floor before, a couple of weeks ago I had a heart procedure, a catheter procedure, an outpatient procedure. Apparently it worked pretty well. I am standing here talking to you today. I feel good. But a lot of people go through this, and I became a statistic the day that happened. I guess I now have a preexisting condition; so be it. One out of three Americans fit that category. Why would we not protect them in any health insurance reform bill? That seems like the starting point in our conversation. Yet the bill that passed the House, the Republican bill that passed the House allows Governors to basically ask for waivers so that health insurance plans in their States will not cover people with preexisting conditions or allow people with those conditions to have the same premiums. That is not a good starting place. It is a terrible starting place.

Let's try to make sure that if we are going to move forward on real healthcare reform, we do it in a sensible fashion. Let's put forward a bill not like the one that passed the House, but let's put together a bill that has the support of hospital administrators across the Nation. Let's put together a bill that protects the Medicaid expansion that is part of the Affordable Care Act.

Medicaid is an essential part of healthcare in America for tens of millions of people. Medicaid—most people think, oh, that is health insurance for poor people. Really? That is not an accurate description. For example, in the State of Illinois, Medicaid provides health coverage for half of the children who are born in my State—prenatal care, postnatal care, and the actual delivery of half of the children in my State, under Medicaid.

That is not the most expensive part of Medicaid. The most expensive part in my State and across the Nation is the fact that Medicaid is there to help your mother or grandmother or your dad or your grandfather when they are in a situation in life where they need a helping hand. They may be in an assisted care facility, and the Social Security check is not enough; Medicare is not enough. Medicaid steps in to make sure they have the quality of care they need. Are we going to eliminate that kind of protection?

Ask disabled people and ask the organizations that represent them what it means to have a good strong Medicaid system. These people rely on Medicaid for maintaining their health through disability, day in and day out.

So when the Republicans propose an \$840 billion cut in Medicaid protection across America over 10 years, sadly, they are setting out on a path that could compromise the basic care we

need for babies and new moms, for the elderly in assisted care facilities and nursing facilities, and for the disabled who live in our States. We don't want to see that happen.

It is interesting that my Republican Governor in the State of Illinois seldom comments on Federal legislation. He came out in opposition to the bill that passed the House of Representatives. He said that this is a significantly bad bill for the State of Illinois, and I agree with him. I am glad he spoke up. I don't know how the seven Republican Congressmen who voted for it in my State can ignore that reality. Our Governor—our Republican Governor—believes it is bad for our State in cutting back Medicaid. The hospitals believe it is bad for our State in the impact that it will have on down-State hospitals. Doctors, nurses, and pediatricians also oppose it.

What can we do? What should we do? First, we ought to try to see what we can do to make the Affordable Care Act work better. We can do that on a bipartisan basis. We want to make sure, as the Senator from Kentucky said earlier, that there are available health insurance programs in every county of every State. Certainly, one thing we can do is make sure that a public option is there for everyone if they choose it—something that looks like Medicare.

People respect Medicare. Medicare is a great program for millions of Americans who are seniors and disabled. Why wouldn't we create a program like Medicare—a not-for-profit, government-operated program like Medicare for people who wish to have it? Those who don't can stick with private insurance if that is their choice, but I believe more and more people will move toward the Medicare option. That is something I would like to put on the table in reforming the Affordable Care Act.

Secondly, we need to address the cost of pharmaceutical drugs in America. The costs are out of control.

This week I received a publication from the AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, and they are talking about what is happening to pharmaceutical prices across America. You don't have to tell seniors or those who buy prescription drugs what the reality happens to be.

Let me give you a few numbers to demonstrate why we need to have a new program to make sure drug prices don't go out of control. According to AARP, Americans spent \$457 billion on prescription drugs in 2015, up about 8 percent over the previous year—\$457 billion. The rise in prices for the most popular brand name drugs from 2008 to 2016 is over 200 percent. They have more than doubled in that 8-year period of time for the most popular drugs.

The median salary of a pharmaceutical firm's CEO in 2015 was \$14.5 million, more than any other industry; \$6.4 billion is the amount drug compa-

nies spend advertising directly to consumers in the U.S. annually; \$24 billion is the amount drug companies spend per year marketing to doctors. We are one of only two nations in the world that allows direct consumer advertising. Think about what that means.

When you see all these ads on television for drugs with names you can't pronounce, why are they doing it? It is because the drug companies know that consumers across America will write down the name of the drug and go ask the doctor to prescribe it. Many times, the doctor, rather than debate the issue with the patient or suggest they don't need it or should use a generic, will just write out the prescription. What happens? More expensive drugs get into the system, raising the cost of healthcare, raising the cost of premiums for health insurance. It doesn't make us healthier; it just means healthcare is more expensive.

I love to listen to the warnings on these drugs that go on and on and on. One of my favorites was this: Be sure and tell your doctor if you have had a liver transplant. I am thinking to myself, yeah, I think I would probably mention that somewhere along the way to a doctor.

These warnings should give us fair warning that this is inflating the cost of healthcare across America. It is not making us healthier, and it is running up profits dramatically for pharmaceutical companies. Why is it that exactly the same drugs made in the United States sell for a fraction of their cost in America in places like Canada and Europe? It is a legitimate question. We ought to address it. Do we have the political nerve to do it? I hope so, as part of the Affordable Care Act reform. I hope we sit down and do something on a bipartisan basis to deal with the challenges we face, but first, take repeal off the table.

Let's make the Affordable Care Act stronger. Let's do it on a bipartisan basis. Let's set out to come up with a solution that doesn't do what the House version did, which could eliminate health insurance for millions of people across America and a million people in my State of Illinois.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH RUSSIAN OFFICIALS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, by now we have all had the chance to read the report in the Washington Post that alleges stunning behavior on the part of the President in a meeting with the Russian Ambassador and Russian Foreign Minister.

According to the report, the President revealed classified information about a terrorist threat to officials of a foreign government. The President didn't share it with just any government; the report states he shared it with the Russian Government, a global adversary that has violated the sovereignty of peaceful nations, propped

up dictators and human rights abusers, including Iran and Syria, and has been widely proven to have interfered in our elections and the elections of our allies in Europe.

If this report is indeed true, it would mean that the President may have badly damaged our national security, nothing less, and in several ways. First, the act of a disclosure of this type could threaten the United States' relationships with allies that provide us with vital intelligence and could result in the loss of this specific intelligence source.

We rely on intelligence from our allies to keep America safe. America can't have eyes and ears everywhere. If our allies abroad can't trust us to keep sensitive information close to the vest, they may no longer share it with us. That undermines key relationships and, even more importantly, makes us less safe.

Second, if accurate, such a disclosure could damage our interests in the Middle East. We do not collaborate with Russia in Syria or elsewhere in the Middle East for the simple fact that we have diverging interests. Russia, for example, has worked with Iran to prop up the brutal Assad regime. Sharing vital intelligence with Russian officials could allow the Russians to pursue or even possibly eliminate the source or figure out how the ally conducts operations, including any against Russia or Russia's allies in the region.

Third, if the report is true, the President's alleged carelessness with classified information will further damage the relationship between the White House and the intelligence community—an essential relationship for the security of America. The intelligence community needs to be able to trust the President and trust that he will treat classified information with caution and with care. Our intelligence professionals put their lives on the line every day to acquire information that is critical to our national security and critical to keeping Americans safe. They have done a very good job.

If the reporting is accurate, in one fell swoop, the President could have unsettled our allies, emboldened our adversaries, endangered our military and intelligence officers the world over, and exposed our Nation to greater risk.

Given the gravity of the matter, we need to be able to quickly assess whether this report is true and what exactly was said. So I am calling on the White House to make the transcript of the meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador available to the congressional Intelligence Committees as soon as possible. The White House should make the transcript of the meeting available immediately to the congressional Intelligence Committees. If the President has nothing to hide, he should direct that the transcript of the meeting be made available.

The Members who sit on those committees have the necessary clearances

to review the transcript and any related summary of the President's meeting with the Russians. I agree with the senior Senator from Maine that this briefing should happen immediately. Those committees would be able to help establish the facts before we grapple with the potential consequences.

Last night, the administration issued several overlapping denials. Some questioned the overall veracity of the account. Some took pains to specifically deny certain accusations but not others. This morning, the President tweeted a version of events that undercut his advisers' carefully worded denials and seems to confirm the reports that he had shared the information in question.

Following so closely after Mr. Comey's firing, which was rationalized to the press and the American public in several different ways over the course of a week, this administration now faces a crisis of credibility. The President has told us that we cannot take at face value the explanations of some of his key advisers, but the events of the past week have taken this to an untenable extreme. The timelines and rationales in the administration contradict one another. The truth, as it were, sits atop shifting sands in this administration.

We need the transcripts to see exactly what the President said, given the conflicting reports from the people in the room. Producing the transcripts is the only way for this administration to categorically prove the reports untrue.

Mr. President, there is a crisis of credibility in this administration which will hurt us in ways almost too numerous to elaborate. At the top of the list is an erosion of trust in the Presidency and trust in America by our friends and allies. The President owes the intelligence community, the American people, and the Congress a full explanation. The transcripts, in my view, are a necessary first step. Until the administration provides the unedited transcript, until the administration fully explains the facts of this case, the American people will rightly doubt if their President can handle our Nation's most closely kept secrets.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I noted yesterday that this week we celebrate National Police Week. In particular, we recognize and remember those law enforcement officers who have paid the ultimate price and sacrificed their lives to protect the communities in which they serve. Yesterday, I had the chance to speak about Javier Vega, Jr., a Border Patrol agent who served in South Texas and was tragically killed by two illegal immigrant criminals.

Today, I want to talk about the attack on law enforcement officers in Dallas almost a year ago. Last July, about 800 people gathered in downtown

Dallas for a peaceful march. Given the size of the event, dozens of law enforcement officers were on hand to protect the protesters so they could exercise their fundamental constitutional right. Before 9 p.m., the event had been going very well, by any standard. There wasn't any violence reported in the crowd, even though some similar events across the country hadn't been as calm. But in Dallas, it was clear that there existed a mutual respect between the citizens protesting and law enforcement. There were even social media posts of protesters embracing police officers in a show of solidarity and friendship.

Unfortunately, the night would soon be robbed of any enduring image of that sort of positive scene. A man—someone who came that night explicitly to target law enforcement officers—opened fire, killing five officers and wounding seven more—the deadliest day for American law enforcement since 9/11. The officers who lost their lives that day—Breton Thompson, Patrick Zamarippa, Lorne Aherns, Michael Krol, and Michael Smith—will not be forgotten. They, like the other officers on duty that night—many of whom were injured by the gunmen—didn't look the other way or run the other way when the violence erupted. Like the heroes they are, they ran to the danger, not away from the gunshots and the uproar. They, like law enforcement officers across the country, weren't about to shy away from doing their job, even if that meant putting their own lives on the line.

So today, I want to commend the men and women of the Dallas police force, a group of men and women with incredible courage and unflinching valor in the face of danger. This Police Week I am particularly grateful to them and to the officers and first responders all over the State of Texas and all around our Nation who count the costs and choose to serve their communities day after day, often with little thanks or recognition.

As I said last summer, it shouldn't take an event of this scale to jolt our consciences into action. As legislators, we have tremendous opportunities to better support our men and women in blue who risk their lives to protect ours. We have a duty to do all we can to keep them safe and to keep our society safe and peaceful. So as we celebrate Police Week, I hope we can each do our part to better support the men and women serving in law enforcement.

Later today, Mr. President, I plan to introduce a piece of legislation called the Back the Blue Act, along with Senator CRUZ and Senator TILLIS. This is legislation that makes clear our support for these public servants who spend their lives protecting us and serving us. The Back the Blue Act would create a new Federal crime for killing or attempting to kill a Federal judge, a law enforcement officer, or a federally funded public safety officer.

It would create a new crime for assaulting a law enforcement officer, as well.

There is no justification—none at all—for attacking a police officer. It is an act of anarchy to attack the very people who help keep our society safe and protected.

We need to know and need to show that we value their lives, and we need to make it absolutely clear that we will hold those who carry out crimes against our police officers accountable. The Back the Blue Act sends that message loud and clear.

I think it is important to point out that this legislation would also help make our communities stronger by allowing grant funds to be used for efforts to help foster more trust between police and the communities they protect. This bill would better serve the men and women who work tirelessly in our communities every day. So I would hope our colleagues would join me in supporting it.

We can do more to protect and support our law enforcement officers, and we can start with the Back the Blue Act to do just exactly that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I would like to commemorate National Police Week and the lives and sacrifices of two extraordinary Massachusetts law enforcement officers who fell in 2016: Thomas Clardy, a trooper with the Massachusetts State Police, and Ronald Tarantino, a police officer with the Auburn Police Department. Their names will be inscribed on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial here in Washington, DC, in honor of their service.

By the end of this year, more than 21,000 names will be on that wall. We will never forget their service and sacrifice to our communities and to our country. With the help of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, we pledge to their families and loved ones that they will have the support and resources they need.

FIRING OF JAMES COMEY

Mr. President, I rise to speak about President Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey. In and of itself, this action by President Trump is seismic and has shaken the very foundation of our government and, I dare say, of our democracy. But just yesterday, the American people were also once again confronted by Presidential actions that raised both alarm and the need for investigation. In a new story, the Washington Post reported that President Trump revealed highly sensitive classified material to senior Russian officials during a meeting last week. According to the Post story, President Trump reportedly revealed information about ISIS that could compromise a partner country's key intelligence sources and enable Russia to, according to the story, "identify our sources and techniques" for gathering intelligence.

There could be no greater compromise of American security. The information that President Trump revealed was so sensitive that the United States had previously refrained from sharing it even with our allies.

President Trump's decision to relay some of our most sensitive intelligence with representatives of the Russian Government betrays an astounding lack of judgment. By revealing what is called "code-word" information to Russia, President Trump may have compromised key intelligence sources, endangered the fight against ISIS, and undermined the trust of our international partners.

While the President may have the authority to declassify U.S. intelligence, it is imperative to the safety of our military and intelligence personnel and those of our partners that he do so through a careful and deliberative process. There is no evidence that Donald Trump did that.

Congress must immediately investigate this irresponsible action and take steps to ensure that President Trump does no additional damage to national security in his dealings with Russia. This dangerous behavior comes on the heels of the President's reckless decision to fire former FBI Director James Comey, pushing our country ever closer to a constitutional crisis. President Trump's firing of Mr. Comey is disturbingly reminiscent of Watergate's Saturday Night Massacre, when our Constitution was last subject to an executive-branch-induced stress test.

Then, President Nixon fired the independent prosecutor, Archibald Cox, who was leading the investigation into the Watergate scandal and the Nixon campaign's involvement in it. Now President Trump has fired his FBI Director, who was leading the investigation into the Russian interference scandal and the Trump campaign's involvement in it. Mark Twain is purported to have said that history doesn't repeat itself, but it does tend to rhyme. Unfortunately, there is no humor in President Trump's actions.

At first, we were supposed to believe that the President fired Director Comey because of the way he handled the investigation of Hillary Clinton's email server, which was unfair to her. That was what President Trump sent his staff out to tell the press and the American people. The official White House statement from Press Secretary Sean Spicer on May 9 said that President Trump acted based on the clear recommendation of both Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and Attorney General Jeff Sessions. That was a reference to the now-infamous memorandum by Attorney General Sessions, prepared by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, which cited Comey's "handling of the conclusion of the investigation of Secretary Clinton's emails" as the reason why the public purportedly had lost confidence in the FBI and on which Attorney General Sessions based his recommendation to the President that he fire Mr. Comey.

On May 9, Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway said that President Trump "took the recommendation of his Deputy Attorney General, who oversees the FBI Director." Then on May 10, Deputy White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said that the President "took the recommendation seriously. And he made a decision based on that." Even Vice President PENCE said that President Trump's decision to fire Comey was based on the Rosenstein memo.

So the American people were being told to believe that President Trump took the unprecedented step of firing the FBI Director in the midst of an investigation of the Trump campaign because James Comey was too hard on Hillary Clinton. That simply didn't pass the laugh test. Who can forget that Candidate Trump repeatedly called her "crooked Hillary Clinton" throughout the campaign? Who can forget that Candidate Trump applauded Director Comey for the way he handled the Clinton investigation? At the end of October 2016, just days before the election and after Comey had reopened the Clinton email investigation, Trump said that Comey had "guts" and had "brought back his reputation."

But it took only 1 day after Mr. Comey's firing for President Trump himself to admit that reason was utterly false. In an interview President Trump said that Rosenstein "made a recommendation, but regardless of recommendation I was going to fire Comey, knowing there was no good time to do it."

So much for the Rosenstein memo. So much for the White House press statement. So much for what Kellyanne Conway said. So much for the words of the Vice President of the United States. If that admission wasn't enough, President Trump went on to tell everyone what was on his mind when he made that decision. Here is his quote:

And, in fact, when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said, "You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story. It's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won."

President Trump's statements about the Russia investigation are, of course, untrue. There is nothing made up about the conclusion of the intelligence community that Russia interfered with our election. The allegations of the Trump campaign's collusion with the Russians are serious. That is why the FBI and the House and Senate Intelligence Committees have been investigating them.

So contrary to what White House senior administration officials and—the President, in fact, admitted that he fired the Director of the FBI precisely because he was overseeing an investigation of the Trump campaign and its ties to Russia. According to all of these various reports, the President did so just after Director Comey had gone to Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein

and asked for more resources for the Russia investigation.

The firing of James Comey now brings the number of law enforcement officials who were investigating the Trump campaign or his administration when they themselves were fired to three—first, Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, then Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, and now Director Comey.

President Trump himself, in his termination letter to Comey, made no mention of the Clinton email investigation but instead expressly linked the firing to the Russia investigation. Trump claimed that he fired Comey despite Comey having informed the President on three separate occasions that he was not under investigation—a claim that has not been substantiated.

Here is the plain and simple truth: President Trump feared that the FBI investigation into his campaign's possible collusion with Russia was getting too close for comfort, so he fired Director Comey. Comey's firing could be nothing less than obstruction of justice masquerading as a personnel action. It is what impeding a Federal investigation looks like. It is what an assault on the rule of law looks like.

If there is one lesson President Trump should have learned from Watergate, it is this: If you are under investigation, don't fire the investigator.

But as disturbing as Mr. Comey's firing is, it gets worse. Days after, President Trump tweeted a veiled threat—one that smacked of witness intimidation. Here is the quote: "James Comey better hope that there are no tapes of our conversation before he starts leaking to the press." Are there recordings? We don't know yet. But if there are, the White House and Justice Department must ensure that they are preserved.

It is clear that President Trump did not learn any of the lessons of Watergate, which only underscores the need for a special prosecutor independent of the White House and Justice Department to get to the bottom of this. The role of a special independent prosecutor is to follow all of the facts wherever they lead. That individual needs to be as far away from the White House as possible.

Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein should not be the one to appoint a special prosecutor. Just 3 weeks on the job, Mr. Rosenstein is now compromised by the questions swirling around his role in the Comey firing: Did Comey meet with Rosenstein and ask for more resources for the Russia investigation? Why did Rosenstein discuss the removal of Director Comey with Attorney General Sessions after Sessions had recused himself from the Russia investigation? Why didn't Rosenstein question Sessions's involvement?

The magnitude of—the decision to appoint a special counsel in these circumstances cannot be made by a political appointee. Instead, I join Minority

Leader SCHUMER's call that the appointment must be made by the highest ranking career civil servant in the Justice Department, someone insulated from politics and the White House. Until we have an independent special prosecutor appointed, we should not move forward with the confirmation of any replacement for James Comey as Director of the FBI.

Additionally, Director Comey should come and testify before Congress, which both Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman BARR and Vice Chairman WARNER have already requested, clearly showing the bipartisan support for this. There are too many unanswered questions that only Director Comey can answer.

Finally, while it has been announced that Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein will brief all Senators and answer their questions, we must still hear from Attorney General Sessions.

We must not lose sight of the fact that a foreign power interfered in our last Presidential election and that the Trump campaign may have colluded with it to win the White House. This strikes at the heart of our government and our very democracy. Our elections must be fair and free of foreign interference. It is time for both Democrats and Republicans to put love of country ahead of party and to come together and demand the appointment of a special prosecutor who will investigate and follow the facts no matter where they lead.

Mr. President, I would like to conclude my remarks today by expressing my opposition to the nomination of Jeffrey Rosen to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Mr. Rosen has a long history, both in government and in the private sector, of defending private industry against regulations designed to protect the American public. When he first worked for the Department of Transportation, he touted the fact that he was involved in ending or withdrawing 180 potential Transportation Department rulemakings.

He has also been hostile to environmental regulations designed to protect our air and water. He opposed greenhouse gas emissions regulations in his role at the Office of Management and Budget and personally represented the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in attempting to undermine climate change science in order to fend off potential regulations. Mr. Rosen's firm represented the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and other auto groups against California over rules meant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase nonpolluting vehicles.

I will vote no on Mr. Rosen's nomination because our automobile safety, environment, and clean energy future are just too important. I urge my colleagues to join me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, the American people were stunned by what we learned happened in the White House. We saw an alarming set of developments about how this President is handling the investigation into Russia's interference with our democracy.

Last Monday, the Senate Judiciary Committee heard testimony from Sally Yates, whom President Trump had asked to serve as Acting Attorney General when he was first sworn into office. Ms. Yates testified that soon after the inauguration, she twice visited White House Counsel Don McGahn to warn him about National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. She warned that General Flynn had been compromised by his secret communications with Russian Ambassador Kislyak and that General Flynn could be blackmailed.

Ms. Yates first visited White House Counsel McGahn on January 26. McGahn invited her back to ask followup questions the following day, on January 27. Those followups included questions about General Flynn's potential criminal exposure.

What else happened on January 27? The President of the United States brought in FBI Director James Comey for a one-on-one dinner, where he reportedly asked Director Comey for a pledge of loyalty. Is the timing of this Comey dinner curious? You bet it is. According to Press Secretary Sean Spicer, President Trump was briefed immediately by White House Counsel McGahn after Ms. Yates' warning. That means the President knew about the Justice Department's concerns with Flynn when he met Director Comey for dinner.

Was the President's request for loyalty from Director Comey an attempt to impede the Justice Department's investigation into General Flynn? Was it an effort by the President to inoculate himself from Russia-related investigations? These are unanswered questions. But when Director Comey reportedly refused to swear his loyalty to President Trump, he apparently sealed his fate as Director of the FBI.

Last Tuesday evening, President Trump fired Director Comey while Comey was giving a speech to FBI agents in Los Angeles. The reason? Well, on Thursday, the President made clear that the Russia investigation was on his mind when he fired Director Comey. He said to Lester Holt of NBC: "When I decided to do it, I said to myself, you know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made up story." President Trump later said that the Russia investigation "should be over with, in my opinion, should have been over a long time ago." Then, on Friday, the President found time to threaten Mr. Comey on Twitter, implying that he had taped their conversations and that he would release the tapes if Comey disclosed what he knew.

Let's be clear. The President is in dangerous territory here. What the President is doing when it comes to potential obstruction of justice is similar to a chapter in history many of us remember. On October 20, 1973, President Nixon fired special prosecutor Archibald Cox when his Watergate investigation got too close to the White House. That sparked a constitutional crisis in America.

Now we have learned that President Trump has disclosed highly classified information to the Russian Foreign Minister and that same Ambassador, Kislyak. The Washington Post reported that the President specifically revealed extremely sensitive intelligence considered so sensitive that details were being withheld from America's allies and tightly restricted even within our own government. Last night, the White House denied this happened. This morning, however, President Trump confirmed in two separate tweets that the story was true.

This kind of disclosure is what former Director Comey and just about every other congressional Republican described last year as "extremely reckless" in the handling of classified information. It jeopardizes critical intelligence sources in the fight against ISIL and the broader fight by America against terrorism.

This morning, European officials reacted, told the Associated Press that at least one European country might stop sharing intelligence with the United States if this is how it is going to be treated. That is not, as the majority leader described it this morning, "drama." This is a real consequence of a dangerous President putting American lives at risk. This is truly incredible and historic. It is a national security breach by the President of incredible proportions. How in the world can we trust the President to put the national security needs of the American people ahead of his own?

There are a lot of parallels between the Watergate era and what we see today, but one major difference from the Nixon era to the Trump era is the willingness of Republicans in Congress to speak out against the abuse of power and to actually serve as a check on the Presidency. Back in Nixon's day, there were Republicans in Congress who were willing to speak truth to power, to say: Enough of the lies and damage to our democratic institutions, and to put the country ahead of party.

Listen, in November of 1973, just a few weeks after the Saturday Night Massacre, Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts was one of the first Republicans to stand up and say he did not feel the country could "stand the trauma that it has been through for the past few months."

In July of 1974, Republican Congressman Lawrence Hogan of Maryland said:

The evidence convinces me that my President has lied repeatedly, deceiving public officials and the American people. . . . Do we want to be the party loyalists who in ringing

rhetic condemn the wrongdoings and scandals of the Democratic Party and excuse them when they are done by Republicans?

On the same day, Republican Congressman William Cohen of Maine said:

I have been faced with the terrible responsibility of assessing the conduct of a President that I voted for, believed to be the best man to lead this country, who has made significant lasting contributions toward securing peace in this country and throughout the world, but a President who in the process, by act or acquiescence, allowed the rule of law and the Constitution to slip under the boots of indifference and arrogance and abuse.

Republican Congressman from Virginia M. Caldwell Butler said:

For years we Republicans have campaigned against corruption and misconduct. . . . But Watergate is our shame.

Republican Congressman Paul Findley of Illinois, whom I ran against when I first had the privilege to serve in the House and whom today I call a friend, said a month later:

Hearings of the Judiciary Committee and developments in the courts have, I believe, clearly established gross negligence, maladministration and moral insensitivity on the part of the President.

That same month, Republican Senator Barry Goldwater from Arizona said:

There are only so many lies you can take, and now there has been one too many.

In fact, at the same time, Senate Republicans nominated Goldwater to deliver a direct message to President Nixon. Goldwater, along with the House Republican leader, John Jacob Rhodes, and the Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott, went to the White House, sat directly in front of President Nixon's desk, and explained that enough was enough.

These courageous Republicans were, of course, talking about lies, corruption, the obstruction of justice, and a danger to our democratic system of government emanating from the Nixon White House. They took our oath of office to protect the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and certainly above a party or short-term policy gain—they took it seriously, and to their courage, we and history owe them a debt of gratitude.

So I ask today, amid a swirling and deeply troubling mix of lies—nearly 500 in just the first 100 days of this new Presidency—obfuscation, the withholding of information, attempts to interfere with Federal investigations regarding possible collusion with a foreign adversary, and thinly veiled threats against those involved in such investigations by our current President, where are the many Republican patriots who are ready to stand up against these troubling abuses and threats?

It has now been more than 7 months since 17 of our intelligence agencies provided overwhelming evidence of a Russian attack on our democracy and an attempt to help elect someone seen as more favorable to their interests, not our interests. The evidence was damning and continues to emerge. Yet

what has this Congress done during this same 7-month period to uphold our oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic"?

Have congressional Republicans launched an independent investigation into this historic cyber act of war as we did after 9/11? Unfortunately, no.

Have congressional Republicans retaliated against Russia for its actions by imposing sanctions or taking other actions, making sure its leadership knows it will pay a price for such attacks and think twice before doing so against the United States or at the expense of our allies? No.

Have Republicans in Congress passed meaningful cybersecurity legislation to help protect America against future attacks and help any States that request help? No.

Have Republicans demanded the appointment of a special prosecutor and insisted that the White House turn over all documents regarding the Trump campaign and ties with Russia, including potentially Russian intelligence? No.

Have Republicans demanded that the President explain why he keeps denying Russia's attack on our election in the face of overwhelming evidence? No.

In fact, has the majority party done anything to respond to, protect against, or even address these troubling attacks and refusals to cooperate from the White House? Sadly, no.

Let me tell you what the majority party has found time to pursue during the 7 months after an attack on our Nation—a cyber act of war that will live in cyber infamy. Some of this you simply cannot make up.

The Republican majorities in the House and in the Senate passed legislation making it easier to kill baby bear cubs and their mothers in their dens, making it easier to work with corrupt regimes overseas, making it harder for Americans to save for retirement, and they are trying to strip healthcare away from millions of Americans in order to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest people in America.

This is, quite simply, an abdication of the majority party's responsibility in Congress to address an attack by a foreign power on our Nation and investigate possible collusion by an erratic and sometimes deceptive White House.

Let me close by asking my Republican colleagues, whom I know care very deeply about the Senate and our Nation, When will you speak up about the travesty unfolding? When will you take even a fraction of the action that would have most certainly occurred if these outrages had occurred under a Democratic President?

We need Republicans in Congress to stand up and protect our democratic institutions and to support a special prosecutor and an independent investigation into the Russian election interference now.

I am hopeful some Republican Senators will have the courage to join us

in calling for a special prosecutor. We need someone above politics and above the controversy whom we can trust to really pursue the facts and the evidence, wherever it may lead, to determine what we can do to protect America from another Russian attack in our next election and to hold Russia accountable for what we have been through. It is time to do this on a bipartisan basis. America is waiting.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). If no one seeks recognition, time will be charged equally to both sides.

The Senator from Louisiana.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, it is fair to say that Americans are sick of partisanship when it comes to issues of greatest concern. They are asking, if you will, that we in the Senate put party behind us—behind the needs of the people. This is especially true when we are speaking of those issues of greatest importance, and I would argue that the replacement of the Affordable Care Act is one of those issues of greatest importance.

Whatever the excuse, no Senator of either party should sit on the sidelines. This is such an important issue that every Senator, whatever her or his personal views, should be engaged.

We know President Trump's principles, if you will. He laid them out time and again on the campaign trail. He wants to maintain coverage, lower premiums, care for those with pre-existing conditions, and eliminate the ObamaCare mandates upon individuals and businesses.

At his inauguration speech, he spoke of the forgotten man and of the forgotten woman. In fact, we can see that just before his inauguration, he emphasized that with what he said during the campaign:

We're going to have insurance for everyone. There's a philosophy in some circles that if you can't pay for it, you don't get it. That is not going to happen to us.

He also emphasized the quality of the care, saying that people covered under the law that he would propose to replace can expect to have great healthcare. "It will be in a much simplified form. Much less expensive, much better," he said to the Washington Post just before he was sworn in. These are his principles.

When he was sworn in and gave his inaugural address, speaking of the forgotten man and the forgotten woman, I cannot help but think that he was influenced as he went through counties seeing folks with terrible tales of their child dying from opioid addiction or their spouse unable to afford insurance under ObamaCare.

I will point out that there is a huge dimension to this that we sometimes forget, but we should not. Senator JERRY MORAN from Kansas made the point that healthcare is like no other issue. It is an issue which touches us most personally. I think President

Trump saw that on the campaign trail. He saw the parent of an adult child with mental illness, and she could not get a psychiatric bed for her child. We know the fate of that child if he does not have the care he needs. He will end up either in a homeless shelter, a jail cell, or the morgue. That is the human dimension to this, and that is why we need to help President Trump fulfill his pledge.

Voters understand what we are speaking of; they understand the importance of it. But let me speak just a little bit more to the politics of this because we cannot separate what we do here in Washington, DC, from politics.

There are researchers from Princeton who recently published a report. If you look at White males and females between 18 and 54 who lack a college education, their life span is decreasing. Now, for Hispanics, African Americans, and other minorities, it is improving, but for this group, it is decreasing.

I have seen data which shows that in the population centers of the United States in which this phenomenon is being most seen—these Whites from age 18 to 54, noncollege educated, their life span is decreasing—the counties in which this effect is most seen were most likely to vote for Donald Trump. Think about the politics of this. The politics are that a group of folks who understand that their life is materially and physically declining, with higher rates of suicide, addiction, liver disease, and other chronic illness, ending in premature death, voted significantly more for the President who swore that he would remember them, who spoke of the forgotten man and the forgotten woman. His pledge to them was a lifeline. Their vote for him was a cry for help.

This is not just a human dimension; there is a political dimension leading to a policy necessity.

Let's stop for a second. There is a key issue of cost. We understand that the Affordable Care Act was too expensive. We can save money. But let's not fool ourselves; it is still going to cost. We can save the \$150 billion or so that the House suggested we have to save. We know the rules the Senate has to address to save at least that much money. On the other hand, we know that Congress has mandated people can get care; therefore, if Congress mandates that folks get care, then Congress should help provide the means by which to pay for it.

There are some who think, oh, my gosh, Congress does not need to provide for the money for care, and everything will be good. I am a physician. I have been in the emergency room at 2 in the morning, and at 2 in the morning, when those emergency room doors are open, whoever comes in is treated. She may have heart failure, he may have a drug overdose, they might be a schizophrenic, or they might be somebody vomiting blood. Each one of them receives all the care that he or she needs to stabilize their emergency condition.

And if they have to be hospitalized—think of a car wreck with multiple traumas—and they are in the hospital for 4 months, they still get that care because Congress mandates that. But, if Congress does not provide the means to pay for it, the cost of that care is shifted not to government; the cost of that care is shifted to the privately insured. All of those getting their insurance through their employer begin to pay higher premiums—much higher premiums. Somebody pays. And if we do not fulfill our obligation, after mandating that those patients get cared for—we, being Congress—then society pays, and society is the person struggling to make ends meet and now finds out from her employer that her premium has increased 20, 30, sometimes 50 percent—all because of the cost-shifting that occurs.

It is not just the group market. Under ObamaCare, we can see that in the individual market, premiums have skyrocketed. It is not that the Affordable Care Act is working so well. Last week I communicated with someone who lives in San Francisco, and she and her young family are paying \$20,000 a year for a premium, \$6,000 deductibles; none of them is sick, none of them will meet their deductibles, but living in a very expensive city, having to struggle to pay their mortgage, groceries, and transportation, now they have to come up with \$20,000 to pay for their healthcare. That is all because of the Affordable Care Act.

Then I spoke with a person in Washington, DC, and someone in Washington DC—that person who is a consultant on insurance issues, knows insurance backward and forward, says that for his family, the premium is \$24,000 a year, with a \$13,000 family deductible. The insurance expert says: I will be out \$37,000 in a single year before my insurance kicks in. Families cannot afford that.

I will finish up lastly with a story from Louisiana. Folks never believe this because it seems too crazy, but I put it on my Facebook page. There is a couple back home, 60 and 61. They were quoted a premium of \$39,000 for a premium of one year, with a deductible on top of that—\$39,000. We can see that in the individual market, the Affordable Care Act is not working, it is becoming the un-Affordable Care Act. We have to address this.

But let me say, we have to address it whether we are a Democrat or a Republican. We must respond to the cries for help coming from those folks suffering from addiction, mental illness, heart failure, or any other chronic disease for which they do not have coverage, but also to the cries for help from middle-class families who cannot afford these premiums, and if they don't sacrifice something in the budget to pay for it, under the Affordable Care Act, they will be fined.

Let's return to the political side. The political side is that I have voters back home asking why Republican Senators

are not helping a Republican President fulfill his pledge—a pledge to all voters—but one that certain Republican voters specifically took to heart; that is, to fulfill his pledge of caring for those with preexisting conditions, continuing coverage, lowering premiums, and eliminating mandates.

If you are a Democratic Senator, the forgotten woman and the forgotten man is in your State too. I can promise you, even if you are not a Republican but you are a Democrat, you have an opioid crisis in your State. So if we are now looking at addressing Medicaid expansion or the affordability of the individual market, and you are a Democratic Senator and you decide to sit on the sideline—if you are a voter in that State, you should be asking why.

Let's face it. Speaking of my Democratic colleagues, many of you do not like President Trump. Some of you hate President Trump. Some of you like him, but you have to pretend that you hate him. Even though this is President Trump's pledge, this is not about President Trump. This about the voters—the patients, the people in our States who either cannot afford their insurance or who have an addiction or some mental illness or some other critical mental healthcare need that, if this ObamaCare replacement is not done well, will leave them far worse off.

I have heard some of the excuses from my Democratic colleagues as to why they cannot participate. They say: Oh, we are using the word “repeal” or, oh, we are not going through a normal committee process—oh, this, or oh, that. I concede it all. Who cares? If you are a voter right now, and your child is addicted to opioids, do you really care that there is a semantic issue regarding whether or not we are saying “repeal” or “repair”? Do you really care that after 8 years of hearings, we don't have a few more hearings? Do you even understand the difference between reconciliation versus normal process? I would say no, because the principal thing that concerns you is that your child is desperate for help and you are not sure that the help will continue.

So I say to my Democratic colleagues: Whatever the excuse, ignore the excuse, and please engage.

Let me finish where I started. I think the average American right now wants every Senator, whether Republican or Democrat, to help President Trump fulfill his pledge to maintain coverage, lower premiums, and care for those with preexisting conditions, without mandates. Every Senator should listen to the American people as they ask us to put patients over party, to put the American people over partisanship.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during quorum calls until 12:30 p.m. today be equally divided.

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

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

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a colloquy with my colleagues on the floor to talk about Police Week.

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

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, during this week, all across the country, people are honoring the men and women who serve as law enforcement officials. Clearly, they deserve and receive recognition every day for what they do, but this is an incredibly difficult job.

Last night, I was with some of our officers from Missouri and with family members, and I said: A lot of times, it is easier for you to walk out the door than it is for your family to see you walk out the door, not knowing what you are going to face every day.

When Senator COONS and I came to the Senate 7 years ago, we created and cochaired the Senate Law Enforcement Caucus. It is a privilege to be part of that and also to speak today on behalf of those who serve us.

This is a week in which we take a moment to recognize the law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Today, I want to pay tribute to three Missouri law enforcement officers who were killed in the line of duty this past year. Master Sergeant Carl T. Cosper of the Barry County Sheriff's Office was one of those, as were Officer Blake Curtis Snyder of the St. Louis County Police Department and Deputy Sheriff Paul Allen Clark of the St. Francois County Sheriff's Office.

Just last month, Master Sergeant Cosper was killed in a vehicle collision while responding to a domestic disturbance call. He had served the Barry County Sheriff's Office for 10 years before that fatal accident.

In October of 2016, Officer Blake Snyder was shot and killed while responding to a disturbance. He had served the St. Louis County Police Department for 4 years. He is survived by his wife and their 2-year-old son. I had a chance last night to visit with his wife again. Elizabeth and her brother Justin, also a police officer in St. Louis County, were here earlier this year to talk about police and families and what we need to do to really express our understanding of what those families go through, their strength and their resilience, both humbling and inspiring, and I am sure they are passing along those very values to Blake's 2-year-old son.

In July of 2016, Deputy Sheriff Paul Clark died from complications related to injuries he sustained in October of 2015 when he was intentionally struck by a stolen vehicle near Desloge, MO.

Deputy Clark had served the St. Francois County Sheriff's Department for 13 years and had previously served with the Park Hills Police Department for 5 years. He is survived by his wife, two children, and by their grandchildren.

All of these individuals are heroes, and our prayers remain with their families.

Let me now turn to Senator COONS. As I said earlier, he and I founded the Law Enforcement Caucus when we came to the Senate. We try on a regular basis to have opportunities to talk about policing practices, family challenges, and mental health issues that police deal with every day. I turn to Senator COONS for some comments.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from the State of Missouri. Working with Senator BLUNT, my cochair of the Law Enforcement Caucus, has been a terrific experience. We have had the opportunity over several years and several Congresses now for more than a dozen conversations, where we invite law enforcement leaders from around the country to talk about partnership between Federal, State, and local law enforcement, intelligence sharing, equipment issues, policy and operational issues to allow us to provide needed support for the men and women of law enforcement.

It is my honor to join with several of my colleagues today to recognize the men and women of law enforcement as part of National Police Week. Together, we offer our gratitude and our support to the men and women of law enforcement and their families, who together support our communities.

It is only May, and yet my home State of Delaware has already been reminded of the tremendous risks and great sacrifices made by law enforcement officers and their families.

In February of this year, Lieutenant Steven Floyd of the Delaware Department of Correction was killed on the job in a prison riot in Smyrna, the Delaware correctional center. He was a 16-year veteran of the department and left behind his wife of 28 years, Sandra; his children, Candyss, Steven, Jr., and Chyvante; and two grandsons.

Just last month, Corporal Stephen Ballard of the Delaware State Police was senselessly gunned down while investigating a suspicious vehicle. Corporal Ballard had served with the Delaware State Police for 8½ years and left behind his wife Louise and his daughter Abigail.

Delawareans are still grieving for the loss of both of these brave men in the line of duty.

As we recognize the entire law enforcement community from across our country during National Police Week, we should honor their sacrifice by serving them as well as they serve us. This week and every week, we must do everything we can to honor our obligations to fallen heroes and their families.

In the wake of these losses in Delaware, I am committed to continuing to

work with my colleagues across the aisle and across the country, like Senators KLOBUCHAR, CORNYN, and Senator BLUNT, to make sure our officers have the resources they deserve to do their jobs and to come home safely at the end of every shift. That means continuing to champion programs like the Bulletproof Vest Partnership, which literally saves officers' lives. Delaware knows the importance of this long-running program all too well. Two of our Delaware Capitol Police officers who were shot in the line of duty survived due to bulletproof vests provided through this vital and ongoing Federal-State partnership.

I will also continue to work here in the Senate with colleagues to reform the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program to make sure the families of officers who lose their lives or are permanently disabled in the line of duty receive the benefits they deserve.

Chairman GRASSLEY, who has joined us here on the floor, is one of the lead cosponsors of this bill, along with Senators HATCH, GILLIBRAND, and KLOBUCHAR—is one of many cosponsors. This is a bill that will take important steps in these reforms, and it is just one step away from passing the Senate, and my understanding is it could head to the House of Representatives as early as later today.

Of course, our commitment to serving the men and women of law enforcement has to extend beyond the patrol car and the police station. Building and maintaining trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve is essential to preventing and reducing crime and keeping officers safe. That is why Senator BLUNT and I have both taken steps to encourage the strategy of community policing, which helps officers do their job more effectively in partnership with local communities. We have also continued to support local officials who are working to bring Federal resources, expertise, and convening power to help strengthen the bonds between the police and the communities they serve.

In light of all these important efforts, we can't let ideology or partisan politics in this Chamber prevent us from doing our job in support of law enforcement. We will fail those who serve us if we do so. We have to move forward in a bipartisan way to improve and invest in officer safety. That is why I am proud to stand with my colleague and partner from Missouri as cochair of the Law Enforcement Caucus. The mission of this bipartisan group of Senators is simple: to bring law enforcement, community leaders, issue experts, and Republicans and Democrats together to share ideas and generate solutions to challenges facing State and local law enforcement. We have hosted more than a dozen briefings and events.

Now more than ever, Senator BLUNT and I are committed to this mission. We are on the floor today to honor women and men, like Corporal Ballard

and Lieutenant Floyd from Delaware, who put on the uniform and the badge every day, not knowing whether they will come home at the end of their shift. We are here today for their families, whose sacrifice and burden are heavy.

When I attended Corporal Ballard's moving memorial service earlier this month, the most powerful speaker among many was his widow, Louise. She stood up, stood tall, and with a smile on her face thanked the 3,000 officers from 36 States across the country who had come to stand in solemn procession and honor Corporal Ballard's sacrifice and pay their respects.

Louise Ballard said:

This is my Stephen's victory, when I get to see men and women from all over the country who every single day get up and do a job. A job that's hard, a job that requires heart.

Few jobs are as hard or require as much heart as patrolling the streets and protecting our communities.

This week, together we honor the service and sacrifice of those law enforcement officers whose names have been added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial this year and the hundreds of thousands, even millions, who even today, even tonight, will be on patrol keeping our communities and our families safe.

Mr. President, I yield to the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my colleague from Iowa and partner in legislating in the interest of law enforcement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues from Missouri and Delaware for leading this effort to honor our law enforcement officers and particularly those who have been killed in the line of duty.

In 1962, Congress passed a joint resolution proclaiming the week of May 15 as "National Police Week."

The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, located here in Washington, DC, is our country's monument to these fallen officers. Carved into the marble walls of the memorial are the names of the more than 20,000 officers killed in the line of duty throughout our Nation's history. Every year, tens of thousands of fellow officers from around the world come to Washington, DC, as part of Police Week to pay tribute to the men and women whose names are inscribed on this wall.

The planned events surrounding Police Week began with the 36th Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial Service, held on the west front of the U.S. Capitol. The President of the United States was the keynote speaker, and his presence was a testament to the fraternity of this noble profession. Immediately following the service, there was a wreath-laying at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. The annual memorial service is an opportunity for all Americans to reflect on the dedication of these public servants and the ultimate sacrifice they have paid for this great Nation.

We should also acknowledge the families of the fallen, whose lives have been forever changed by the loss of their loved ones.

During the memorial service, there was a Roll Call of Heroes for the 143 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty last year. Their names will adorn the memorial walls in perpetuity. The list of the fallen include five of my fellow Iowans: Sergeant Anthony Davis Bemino of the Des Moines Police Department; Officer Susan Louise Farrell of the Des Moines Police Department; Patrolman Justin Scott Martin of the Urbandale Police Department; Sergeant Shawn Glenn Miller of the West Des Moines Police Department; and Officer Carlos Bernabe Puentes-Morales of the Des Moines Police Department.

We honor these great heroes for laying down their lives to protect their communities in Iowa. There is no year in recent memory in which so many Iowans have lost their lives in the line of duty.

I would like to specifically address the ambush-style killing of Sergeant Bemino and Officer Martin. These officers were heinously murdered by the same perpetrator on the same night while they sat in their patrol cars. While the exact motive of the killer is unknown, he nevertheless sought out these brave men and gunned them down in cold blood.

These ambush-style attacks have become more prevalent since the incidents in Dallas, TX, and Baton Rouge, LA, spanning 10 days last July. According to a report by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, there were a total of 21 officers killed in ambush-style attacks just last year—the highest total in two decades.

There has been much vitriol written and directed toward law enforcement over the last few years. The notion that the actions of a few bad individuals implicate the entire profession may still, unfortunately, endanger public servants in the area of law enforcement.

This sort of rush to judgment against all law enforcement officers ought to end and end right now. The men and women of law enforcement make great sacrifices every day to protect our families and, of course, all of our fellow citizens. They do so freely, not out of a sense of obligation but because they are dedicated to the cause of justice.

Their devotion merits our attention, admiration, and we are deeply indebted to them. This is why today I am submitting a bipartisan resolution to commemorate Police Week and honor those who have given their lives in this pursuit. I thank my colleagues in the Senate who have cosponsored this resolution with me.

I call on all Americans to remember the fallen and pay tribute to the sacrifices they have made. To quote the motto of the Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary: "Never Let Them Walk Alone."

I hope that during Police Week, the Senate will pass my legislation to reform the operations of the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program. Delays in the award of benefits to the families of fallen officers have become intolerable, and those families deserve to know the status of their applications during the process.

In addition, the Judiciary Committee has reported two other bills that I hope the Senate will take up during Police Week. One bill sets standards for the use of a new form of DNA evidence. The second makes an allowable use of COPS grants for recruiting and promoting of military veterans as police officers.

Finally, during Police Week, my Judiciary Committee will report a bill that is designed to provide mental health services to police officers who live through and with enormous stress as they work to protect us.

I am pleased to join with my colleagues in saluting the service of our law enforcement officers during Police Week.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, before we turn to Senator CORNYN, I want to mention his leadership in the National Criminal Justice Commission Act and also thank Senator GRASSLEY for moving the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act out of his committee this week. Those are two of the things we clearly can do that will make a difference to people in law enforcement and their families, and there has been no more strident advocate of families or those who serve in law enforcement than the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am delighted to be here during Police Week, along with our colleagues from Missouri, Delaware, Minnesota, and Iowa to celebrate the men and women in blue who put their lives at risk so that our communities can be safer, more stable, more prosperous places.

I am reflecting this week on the terrible experience in Dallas, TX, about a year ago when Chief David Brown inspired the Nation with his response to the terrible tragedy there that took the lives of five Dallas police officers and injured seven more.

Following the attack, Chief Brown made clear that if you want to see change or if you want to protest law enforcement, why not instead join their ranks and be a part of the solution. I am grateful to him for his encouragement of the young men and women who have many opportunities to serve their communities—many in uniform.

The truth is, we can do a lot of good by inspiring confidence in law enforcement and showing our support for them. We saw what was referred to by the former Director of the FBI as the "Ferguson effect," where, in fact, he said it was his view that many police officers were afraid of being criticized

unjustly, so they withheld or were reticent in acting in the face of a criminal activity.

We need to make sure that our law enforcement personnel know we are firmly behind them and we will always support them. As Chief Brown liked to point out, if somebody has crossed a line they should not cross, that is an appropriate subject for disciplinary action on a police force.

There is never any excuse for assaulting a police officer. That is the thin blue line between us and anarchy in our society.

I thank the Senator from Minnesota for working with me on the American Law Enforcement Heroes Act that the chairman of the Judiciary Committee just mentioned. This bill will help State and local law enforcement hire more veterans into their ranks. Obviously, that is relevant experience and training that can help our law enforcement departments across the country be better and take advantage of these great patriots who have now taken off one uniform to put on another.

We know there are places in the country where, despite the best efforts of law enforcement, danger is spiking violent crime rates in some parts of the country due to dangerous criminals like the MS-13 gang, a vicious gang from Central America that is wreaking havoc in parts of the country. We can't let our officers face these dangers without knowing we have their backs.

I am delighted to be here with our colleagues celebrating National Police Week and making it clear to the men and women in blue that we unequivocally support them and stand by them and need to let all of our country men and women know that these are true American heroes who deserve our respect and support every day, not just during Police Week.

I yield to our friend and our colleague from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise with my colleagues today in recognition of Police Week. I thank Senator BLUNT and Senator COONS for bringing us together, as well as Senator GRASSLEY and Senator CORNYN.

Law enforcement officers play a critical role in keeping our communities safe, and Police Week is all about honoring their dedication and sacrifice and, sadly for so many families, those officers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Our officers are on the frontlines of public safety, and while most people run away from crime scenes or run away from disaster, they run bravely toward it.

In my State, we were reminded all too well of the courageous dedication of law enforcement just this last year when Jason Falconer, an off-duty police officer at a shopping mall spending his free time on his own, encountered a horrific scene of a man unhinged who was stabbing people in the St. Cloud shopping mall. Falconer didn't even

pause. He made sure that he saved the people who were wounded; 10 were wounded that day. So many would have been killed if he had not intervened—an off-duty officer.

I think about Officer Shawn Schneider, who is no longer with us, in Lake City, MN. I met with his family several times. This was a brave officer, a popular officer in a small community. One night he was called to the scene of a domestic abuse case. A young woman, scared, had called. He showed up at the door, and a man unhinged opened the door and shot and killed that officer.

The story behind that officer and the people behind that officer are the ones who carry on his memory—his fellow officers, as we see this week during Police Week, his family, his widow, and their three children. I will never forget sitting in the pews of that church and hearing the story as those three little kids walked down the aisle. There were two young boys and a girl in a blue dress covered in stars. The story was that the last time the family had been in that church and the last time those children had been in that church was for the church nativity play, and their dad, Officer Schneider, was sitting there watching them with such pride. A few weeks later, there they were at his funeral.

Those are the people we remember during this important week. Our job as U.S. Senators is to treat them in the way that they treat their jobs. They go to work every day without fear or favor. That is what we have to do when we think about police officers.

There are issues, as Senator COONS mentioned, we need to work on—policies and the relationship between officers and our communities. We have to promote more community policing, more training, more recruiting. That is why I am very positive about these bills—the COPS bill I have with Senator MURKOWSKI, where we finally have bipartisan sponsorship for grants that have now helped to place approximately 129,000 police officers on the beat in more than 13,000 State, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies.

In that community I mentioned, St. Cloud, are the recipients of some of the grants we are talking about. That is why Senator MURKOWSKI and I are taking on this issue, to make sure that this program continues to be funded and that, in fact, we reinforce the program.

The bill Senator CORNYN just mentioned that we are leading together to promote the hiring of veterans as law enforcement officers would encourage local police departments to hire and train veterans as cops while providing our veterans with the opportunity to continue to serve their communities.

Yes, we can do all we can to have the backs of our officers and to work with them and our communities, but what we are doing this week is something a little different. We honor them. We recognize their sacrifices, whether it is taking dangerous criminals off the

street, whether it is preventing extremist groups from recruiting people in our neighborhoods, whether it is fighting the opioid abuse epidemic, whether it is simply giving a kid a second chance—and they do those kinds of things all the time.

Law enforcement officers are doing some of the hardest and most important work out there. We owe our safety to them, and we thank them for their remarkable service.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, in conclusion, I thank my colleagues, Senators KLOBUCHAR, GRASSLEY, CORNYN, and BLUNT, for joining us today in a colloquy on the floor. It is a small but important gesture of bipartisan support, sustained and long-lasting bipartisan support for the community of law enforcement that serves each of us and our communities every day.

I wish to yield to my friend Senator BLUNT for his closing remarks.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I thank Senator COONS.

The pieces of legislation to support officers and their families are wide ranging, even legislation to be voted out of the Judiciary Committee today. It was exactly 1 year ago today that President Obama signed the Fallen Heroes Flag Act into law. This is a bill that I introduced along with my colleague that provides that American flags be flown over the U.S. Capitol and given to the families of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and other first responders who lose their lives in the line of duty.

As Senator KLOBUCHAR so well pointed out, these are the people who run to danger when the rest of us are able to head the other way. We are grateful to them and grateful for them.

Mr. President, I think we will yield the floor with great appreciation for the law enforcement officers who are being recognized this week. There are still too many names that Senator GRASSLEY mentioned who will be added to the over 20,000 officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty since the country was founded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time from 2:15 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. today be equally divided in the usual form; and that at 5:15 p.m., all postcloture time be expired and the Senate vote on the Rosen nomination; that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume consideration of the Brand nomination; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote on the Brand nomination occur at 12 noon on Wednesday, May 17; and that if cloture is invoked, the time count as if it were invoked at 1 a.m. on Wednesday; finally, that if cloture is invoked on the Brand nomination, the cloture vote on the Branstad nomina-

tion occur following disposition of the Brand nomination; and that if cloture is not invoked on the Brand nomination, the cloture vote on the Branstad nomination occur immediately following the failed cloture vote.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from New Mexico.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, it is an honor to join my colleagues. I know Senator COONS and others have come together as a bipartisan group to talk about fallen police officers.

It is with my greatest respect and deepest sympathy that today I honor five fallen New Mexico heroes on the floor of the Senate. These five brave men were police officers who died in the line of duty. Police officers who sacrificed their lives in service to the people of their communities and our State.

Police Officer Jose Ismael Chavez was a member of the Hatch Police Department. While conducting a traffic stop in Hatch on August 12, 2016, one passenger exited and opened fire on Officer Chavez. Officer Chavez is survived by his wife and two children.

Secondly, Police Officer Clint E. Corvinus of Alamogordo was part of the Alamogordo Police Department and was shot while pursuing a suspected felon on foot in Alamogordo on September 2, 2016. Officer Corvinus is survived by his daughter.

Deputy Sheriff Ryan Sean Thomas of the Valencia County Sheriff's Department was responding to a call for service on December 6, 2016, when his patrol car left the roadway between Los Lunas and Belen, and overturned. He was ejected from his car. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and a baby boy after he died.

Sheriff Steven Lawrence Ackerman, of the Lea County Sheriff's Department, was killed in a single vehicle crash near Encino on January 17, 2017. Sheriff Ackerman had served with the Lea County Sheriff's Department for 14 years and previously with the Lea County Detention Center for 12 years. He is survived by his wife, daughter, son, and grandson.

Police Officer Houston James Largo, of the Navajo Tribal Police, was shot while responding to a domestic violence call near Prewitt, NM. He passed away the next day on March 12, 2017. He was only 27 years old.

There are no words to express the sadness or the gratitude we all feel toward these New Mexico officers and their families and toward all police officers who are killed in the line of duty. We honor them all this Police Week and by legislation we introduced last week in the Senate to extend flying the flag half-staff for the first responders. We will push to give first responders the respect they are owed by passing the Honoring Hometown Heroes Act.

Every day, tens of thousands of policemen and policewomen serve our

communities in myriad ways, from tracking down violent criminals to finding shelter for homeless persons. The police and their families deserve our respect, gratitude, and support every day.

I thank you, Officer Chavez, Officer Corvinus, Deputy Sheriff Thomas, Sheriff Ackerman, and Officer Largo, from the bottom of my heart and with sincere appreciation.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. President, the White House and President Trump face yet another crisis—perhaps the biggest in his chaotic term so far. According to the Washington Post and other outlets, President Trump disclosed highly classified information to the Russian Foreign Minister and Russian Ambassador to the United States in the Oval Office last week. This is utterly stunning.

Congress needs to find out exactly what happened, on a bipartisan basis, but we can tell already that President Trump's behavior in this incident is very dangerous. It is dangerous to our national security institutions, dangerous to the men and women overseas who are serving their country and risking their lives. Many other outlets have confirmed the Washington Post article, and they have cited several sources.

Assuming it is true, the President has endangered our relationship with a partner who gave our security agencies this information. That has ripple effects that will risk similar relationships with other countries. It also could put our sources at risk.

While his national security team denied the news reports this morning, the President was on Twitter contradicting them. He claims he has the right to tell the Russian Foreign Minister anything he wants. I can't think of any parallel in history for the President's dangerous lack of discretion or his dangerous misunderstanding of how to handle classified national security information.

As the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator CORKER put it this way: The White House is in a "downward spiral," and he said it needs to get it "under control." Senator CORKER is a senior Republican. I know the Presiding Officer and I serve with him on the Foreign Relations Committee. He is a man I respect very much, and I hope the White House will listen to Chairman CORKER.

It is very strange that the President chose to meet with the Russian Ambassador at the center of the Trump campaign's contacts to Russia or to allow the Russian press with their electronic equipment into the meeting at the Oval Office, but let's put these strange and dangerous events in the context of the last several weeks and months.

America's intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia interfered in the U.S. election and that they favored the Trump campaign. Now the President is hosting senior Russian officials in the Oval Office and disclosing highly classified information—information that

puts future intelligence and maybe lives at risk.

The day after he fired the FBI Director, President Trump admitted on camera to NBC News that he did so in part because he is frustrated at the FBI's investigation into Russian interference and potential Trump campaign contacts. Congress must get to the bottom of this. Republicans and Democrats must come together for real oversight. Based on what I see now, President Trump's actions call into question his fitness for office and further underscore the imperative for independent investigations.

It is not an exaggeration to say our Nation faces a constitutional crisis. Our Constitution is based on rule of law. In the United States, no man or woman is above the law, not even the President of the United States. Our constitutional democracy is remarkable for many reasons. One is that Presidential action has threatened the fabric of our democracy only a few times in our history. President Nixon's Watergate scandal was one of them, and I believe we face another one today.

President Trump's firing of the FBI Director in the middle of an investigation into the campaign that put him in office and the President's bizarre behavior since should concern all Americans regardless of party. The only rational explanation is that he has something to hide, that he wants to disrupt the investigation into Russia's interference in our election. What possible reason could the President have for wanting to hinder this investigation? It should be his highest priority to ensure it never happens again. Instead he calls it "fake news."

Now, here is what we know. Early in the new administration, the White House Chief of Staff asked the FBI to publicly disavow reports that the FBI was investigating Trump campaign ties to Russia. This attempted political interference was wrong.

The White House next set its sight on House Intelligence Committee chair DEVIN NUNES, who was investigating Russian interference in the election. Representative NUNES made midnight runs to the White House to view documents that he said validated the President's claims that he was wiretapped.

While the information did not ultimately prove that, Representative NUNES still chose to go public with classified information before discussing it with his committee. This was circus-like behavior, which ultimately forced Representative NUNES to recuse himself from the committee's investigation. But it was also serious. It showed that the White House was willing to go to great lengths to interfere with the House investigation into the President.

Next, the President fired Acting Attorney General Sally Yates. At the time, he claimed it was for refusing to defend his Executive order barring Muslims from the country. In the end, her analysis was correct. The Federal

courts found the order to be unconstitutional. We now know that Ms. Yates was fired just days after notifying the White House that then-National Security Advisor Flynn had lied about his conversations with the Russian Ambassador.

She had told the White House that Flynn's own conduct "in and of itself was concerning." She warned that the President's chief advisor on matters of national security was susceptible to blackmail by Russia. It still took the President 18 days to fire Flynn. As Ms. Yates put it, "to state the obvious, you don't want your national security advisor compromised with the Russians."

Now, the President has fired FBI Director James Comey. It defies reason to believe that President Trump fired Mr. Comey because he was too hard on Secretary Clinton. We give the FBI Director a 10-year term so that he or she can do the job free from political interference and follow any investigation wherever it may lead, even into the Oval Office. A deluge of evidence has pointed to the conclusion that the President fired Director Comey for similar reasons as Sally Yates—because he was unhappy with the FBI probe of Russian election interference and possible ties to the Trump campaign.

It has been reported that Director Comey had sought additional resources for the investigation and was receiving daily briefings on the investigation days before he was fired. The U.S. attorney's office in Virginia had also issued grand jury subpoenas to persons with knowledge of Flynn's ties with Russia and Turkey. Well-sourced media reports say the President had become increasingly angry with Director Comey's public statements about the FBI's investigation of him and because Mr. Comey would not confirm the President's baseless claims that the President Obama administration wiretapped Trump Tower.

The President understood that Director Comey would not do his bidding and so he fired him. Still, the White House has flatly lied about the circumstances of Mr. Comey's dismissal. Numerous White House officials, including the Vice President himself, said the decision was at the recommendation of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. They have said this publicly on the record and on camera.

But President Trump himself contradicted them. He said again on camera that he had already decided to fire Director Comey before receiving the Deputy Attorney General's recommendation. He made clear that he was frustrated with the continuing counterintelligence probe into Russia's election influence. He was upset with Mr. Comey's testimony before Congress.

The White House also claimed that Director Comey had lost confidence at the FBI. But in a public hearing last week, my colleague and Senator from New Mexico, Mr. HEINRICH, asked the

FBI's Acting Director if that was true, and the Acting Director strongly denied it. It has been well reported that the Deputy Attorney General threatened to resign based on the White House claims that Mr. Rosenstein advocated for firing Director Comey.

It seems clear that he was told to draft the cover story for the real reason. His memo was short and is dated the same day as the firing.

Now, on what may be the worst development so far, the President of the United States is threatening on Twitter to release "tapes" of Mr. Comey. He is implying, not confirming, that he has tapes of their conversations and that he will release them if Mr. Comey talks to the press and the public.

Mr. Comey knows he is well within his rights to speak publicly as long as he does not reveal classified information. The President's comment is another example of interference. A sitting President is seeking to pressure a fired FBI Director against speaking out publicly, a man who is likely to be a witness before Congress.

Mr. Comey reportedly would like to testify in an open hearing. Apparently, he doesn't have anything to hide. We need to hear his testimony as soon as possible. Let's find out if President Trump demanded the FBI Director's loyalty. If the President does have tapes of their conversations, he should release them, or we need to subpoena them. But let's get to the bottom of this.

At this point, there is more than probable cause to believe that the President is attempting to obstruct the FBI and congressional investigations. President Trump seems to put himself above the law. Firing the FBI Director and the Acting Attorney General and interfering with a congressional investigation are actions of an autocrat. As a former assistant U.S. attorney and attorney general for New Mexico, I have some experience with investigations. When someone interferes with ongoing investigations, it seems clear that they have something to hide. That is not the behavior of an innocent person.

Make no mistake, Russia's interference in our democratic process is an attack upon our Nation. If the President or his associates colluded in any way with Russia in this attack, it would represent the most serious betrayal of our Nation by a President. While there are rarely exact parallels in history, the parallel between Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre and President Trump's Tuesday Night Massacre is hard to ignore.

Nixon's firing of the man heading the investigation into his actions led to his impeachment and resignation. Recall that the first article of impeachment was obstruction of justice. At that point in our history, both Congress and the Supreme Court stood resolute that the President was not above the law. Congress must again stand resolute that the President is not above the

law. It is well past time for Congress to appoint an independent commission like the 9/11 commission.

It must investigate every aspect of Russia's interference with our election and recommend steps to ensure it never happens again. It must investigate whether Candidate Trump or his associates colluded with Russia to interfere with our Presidential election. Congress must do so swiftly and must give the commission sufficient resources to do the job.

The Attorney General is compromised. He has recused himself from any investigation into the Trump campaign. But I believe he violated the terms of his recusal when he weighed in on Director Comey's termination. Several of us will be sending a letter this week to the Justice Department inspector general asking him to investigate this specific issue.

Now the President is about to nominate a new FBI Director, presumably one he believes will be less independent than Director Comey, one who will not pursue the Russia investigation if it points to his campaign.

Given these circumstances, Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein must appoint a special counsel to conduct a counterintelligence investigation into Russia's role in our election and, if necessary, a criminal investigation into the conduct of the Trump campaign and the administration. A special counsel must be appointed before we consider a new nominee for FBI Director.

That nominee needs to be closely scrutinized by the Senate. We need a Director who is nonpartisan and has a law enforcement background. This person will be responsible for restoring Americans' confidence in the FBI and ensuring that he or she does not pledge loyalty to the President but pledges loyalty to the Constitution.

The majority in Congress must listen to the American public, must follow the lessons of history, and must protect the rule of law and our Constitution.

In the United States, no person is above the law, not even—and especially—the President of the United States. In my career in Congress, I have always believed you put the country first. Party comes last. In their hearts, I know my Republican friends and colleagues feel the same. Congress and the Senate need to fulfill the roles the Founding Fathers envisioned: When the executive branch is moving outside the bounds of the rule of law, we must rein it in.

It is well past time for action.

RECESS

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. today.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:27 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5:15 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Utah.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, peace and order are the indispensable pillars of a stable society. They grant us security in our daily lives, trust in our communities, and faith in our democratic institutions. Where peace and order reign, so too does society thrive and prosper, but none of that is possible without our Nation's 700,000 men and women in blue.

Each and every day, these brave sons and daughters—brave souls—stand up for all of us. Each and every day, they stand guard, ready to do justice or risk harm—all on our behalf. So today I rise on behalf of a grateful Nation to recognize them. Their performance is exceptional, and their sacrifice is immense.

Far too often, we take our police officers for granted. Far too often, we forget how hard it is to win and how easy it is to lose the peace and order that we all enjoy, but our police officers never forget. They are always at the ready. As we honor them this week, we remember that the question is not "What causes violence or what causes crime?" but rather, "What causes peace, and what causes security?"

The answer is our men and women in blue.

In celebration of our National Police Week, I wish to express my profound appreciation for our Nation's law enforcement community—the courageous men and women who each day put the safety of others before their own. Their success is impossible to fully measure. It cannot be counted in crime statistics or etched into medals. It can only be seen in the peace and order that their sacrifice makes possible.

Therefore, allow me for a moment to speak directly to our police officers.

Trust that your selflessness does not go unseen, that your service does not go unfelt, and that your sacrifice does not go unknown. We appreciate you, we support you, and we honor you. Law enforcement is among the noblest of professions. You are the brave guardians among us who fight for peace and protect the vulnerable from harm. On behalf of a grateful nation, I wish to thank you and your families for bearing the burden, shouldering the sacrifice, and making us all proud.

Let it be known that I proudly back the blue.

This is a critical moment to show the police our support. We live in a time when law enforcement officials are not only underappreciated but often maligned and, quite often, openly disparaged. Day in and day out, they suffer criticism and pressure. This week we let them know of our respect and admiration.

Today, I wish to express my gratitude for our men and women in uni-

form by sharing stories of their heroism. You see, we hear all about police mistakes, and we hear wall-to-wall coverage of the controversies, but we seldom hear about the acts of bravery and professionalism that distinguish our police officers as the finest in the world. In particular, I would like to relate the account of Utahns Bre and Kayli Lasley, two sisters whose lives were saved by an on-duty police officer.

In September 2015, a man armed with a knife climbed through a bedroom window in Bre and Kayli's Salt Lake City apartment. Once inside, he brutally beat both sisters before pulling out a knife and repeatedly stabbing Bre. Just as the attacker raised his knife to Bre's throat, Salt Lake City police officer Ben Hone charged into the room. He told the intruder to drop his knife.

In that critical moment, with lives literally hanging in the balance, Bre remembers:

That's when I saw the officer, and he was our angel . . . I looked at the officer in his eyes, and he was so professional and calm.

When the attacker refused to surrender his weapon, Officer Hone raised his service pistol and fired, killing the armed intruder and saving Bre's life. In that moment, Officer Hone was truly Bre's guardian angel.

She remembers:

When [we] made eye contact, I knew I was safe. It's a miracle that he had so much composure and was able to take that shot.

In recognition of his heroism, Officer Ben Hone was honored by the National Associations of Chiefs of Police and the American Police Hall of Fame as the 2015 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. I think it was an honor richly deserved.

Officer Hone survived that day. For that, we give thanks, but the sad reality is that many lose their lives in the line of duty. So today I wish to honor those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice and paid the highest price that society can ask. Our debt to them will not—indeed, cannot—be repaid.

Among the fallen is Utah Highway Patrol Trooper Eric Ellsworth, who died only a few days after being struck by a car while on duty in Box Elder County. We also mourn the passing of West Valley City police officer Cody Brotherson and Greater Salt Lake Unified Police Department officer Douglas Barney, who were both killed in the line of duty this past year in Utah.

I express my deepest condolences to the families and friends of these brave heroes and the countless others who have experienced similar tragedies.

Although we cannot bring these officers back, we can honor their legacies by committing ourselves to supporting their brothers and sisters in uniform. To that end, I have introduced and co-sponsored a number of bills this Congress that are meant to assist law enforcement as they serve our communities. These bills include the Rapid