

partisan and peculiar, selective release of classified information.

I will echo another point Senator BLUMENTHAL made. This just happens to be happening at a time when the sanctions we voted on by massive bipartisan majorities—I can stack the votes together, House and Senate. It was something like 515 to 5. It was an enormous, bipartisan vote to sanction the Russians for what they have been doing, and that just went live. The President could impose those sanctions now. Yet he has not. What is the explanation?

The only people this President seems incapable of being tough on are Russians. It is a very unpleasant set of coincidences. At the same time, here we are with the Republican leadership in the House and the Republican leadership in the Senate and virtually every law enforcement and national security official who has come before us is saying: Hey, yeah, they did attack our last election in 2016, and they are going to attack our next election in 2018.

We are warned that a hostile foreign power is going to attack our 2018 election. Where is the legislation to defend against that? Where is the markup of the legislation? Where is the effort to do what needs to be done to defend our democracy? Here we are just a few months out from the election. We are 9 months out. Do I have the math right? It is 9 months between here and there. Nothing.

Why is it that whenever the Russians come up, it seems that the Republican Party has to go into complete stasis, just roll right over.

I offer those thoughts to the distinguished Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I want to very quickly and simply emphasize a couple of those very important points, and maybe the overriding one is the need for action.

The Presiding Officer has demonstrated repeatedly his convictions and conscience, and I want to say how much I have admired much of what he has done during his Senate career. My hope is that others in this body will step forward and say: Enough is enough.

The FISA Court—Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court—is a carefully crafted bipartisan institution meant to protect our country against foreign threats that would destroy our democracy—the very kinds of threats that Russia has repeatedly mounted against us. Its function is balanced by a concern about civil rights and civil liberties, which is why it is a court that must approve warrants for surveillance and searches. Its secrecy goes to the core of what it does so that the agents, operatives, and informants who are the sources of intelligence are protected.

The House Intelligence Committee is about to trash that carefully crafted structure. They are about to release a memo that says, in effect: That court—that carefully crafted balance as a re-

sult of bipartisan work over many years, involving many in this Chamber—means nothing. We will use it for the most gross partisan purposes, partisan gutter politics, and character assassination.

It is a reminder of the darkest days of the McCarthy era when similarly there was a contempt for basic fairness which persisted until Senator McCarthy was asked: Have you no sense of decency?

We are at that moment now, but it is a moment that is dark for all of us in this democracy. It is a moment that should elicit our strongest impulses for decency and democracy.

We know that the special counsel is proceeding with his investigation. We know there is a need to protect that special counsel against firing and political interference. We know there is a need for legislation that is bipartisan, and the need is now. This use of the most gross partisan politics and tactics is proof-positive that there is a need for this legislation.

My hope against hope is that the President will, in fact, impose sanctions; that there will be a bipartisan outcry against this defiance of a 517-to-5 vote, and in this body, a 98-to-2 vote; that there should be sanctions when there is this defiance of our interests by the Russian Government; and, rather than simply listing oligarchs from a Forbes magazine account, that there be real action and accountability. Certainly, the President has avoided the finding of significant transactions, which is his duty under the law.

We need people of conscience and conviction now to step forward at this historic moment. In speeches going forward, I hope that, again, the Senator from Rhode Island—my friend and a leader in this body—will come to the floor and talk further about this issue.

For now, my hope is that the President will heed the advice he has received from his Department of Justice. Yet it is not really his; it is the Nation's Department of Justice. It is his appointee who has said that the release of this memo would be extraordinarily reckless, that it would be reckless, reprehensible, irresponsible, and in defiance of the President's duty to uphold the Constitution and the rule of law.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the January 29, 2018, vote on calendar No. 294, motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 2311, the Pain-Capable Un-

born Children Protection Act. I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the January 29, 2018, vote on Executive Calendar No. 622, motion to invoke cloture on David Ryan Stras, of Minnesota, to be U.S. circuit judge for the Eighth Circuit. I would have voted nay.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I offer this statement to ensure the record reflects my opposition to the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, S. 2311, calendar No. 294, as considered by the Senate on Monday, January 29, 2018. Cloture was not invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 2311 by a vote of 51 to 46. Unfortunately, I was unable to be present for the rollcall vote to invoke cloture on this measure due to multiple flight delays traveling from Wisconsin to Washington, DC.

I oppose this divisive legislation and would have voted against it, as I have previously when I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to this legislation, H.R. 36 when it was considered by the Senate on September 22, 2015. Let me be clear: I believe every American woman deserves access to quality, safe healthcare and the freedom to exercise her individual and constitutional rights to make her own private health decisions with her family and her doctor, without political interference.

Too many States have already enacted record numbers of laws that restrict a woman's access to reproductive health services and the freedom to make her own healthcare decisions. In Wisconsin, numerous measures have been signed into law that impose unreasonable requirements on providers and clinics that often leave families with nowhere to turn and threaten the ability of clinics in my home State to keep their doors open. Like the measure before the Senate, introduced by Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Republican politicians in Wisconsin have already enacted a 20-week ban on abortion procedures in our state, which has real and grave consequences for our families. Politicians are doing this because they think they know better than women and their doctors. The fact is they don't. It is not the job of politicians to play doctor and to dictate how these professionals practice medicine, nor is it the job of government to intrude into the private lives and important health decisions of American families.

The threat in Wisconsin and in States across the country is clear: When politicians play doctor, American families suffer. This is why my good friend and colleague Senator RICHARD BLUMENTHAL and I have introduced the Women's Health Protection Act, S. 510, which would put a stop to these attacks on women's freedoms. This measure would prohibit laws, including State and local regulations,

which unduly limit access to abortion services, including laws that single out providers, close down clinics, and impose onerous restrictions that do nothing to further women's health or safety.

I will continue to work for access to comprehensive reproductive care and vote against proposals that threaten a woman's right to make her own health decisions.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALBERT J. GOMEZ

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, my colleague Senator JIM RISCH joins me today in honoring LTC Albert J. Gomez on his outstanding career as he retires from serving as the West Point field force State coordinator.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez—Al—has set a standard of excellence in Idaho leaving a lasting, positive impression in the lives of many. For nearly 20 years, he has been an invaluable asset to our offices. In 2000, the Idaho congressional delegation began to hold annual service academy days. Service academy days are an opportunity to provide information to Idaho's best and brightest young men and women who are interested in attending our Nation's service academies. Al has been instrumental in setting up service academy days from the beginning while juggling deployment and other commitments. He has assisted numerous Idaho students with obtaining an exceptional educational and service opportunities available at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He is responsible for incorporating the principle method into the delegation's nomination process, which has made a significant difference in the number of Idaho appointees to West Point. In fact, he is considered the "secret weapon" in our delegation responsible for the high success rate of Idaho students receiving appointments to West Point. For Lieutenant Colonel Gomez, his remarkable work has always been about his love for West Point and our country. He is known for his extraordinary mentorship of youth, and candidates are frequently told to listen to Al if they want to be successful.

As a West Point alumni, Al has clear insight into what it takes to succeed at a service academy and what it means to serve our Nation. He earned his regular Army commission in 1979 and started his career in 1980 as a lance missile platoon leader serving in Germany. His assignments took him and his family to Fort Sill, OK, and Neckarsulm, Germany, which included command of a Pershing II missile nuclear capable firing battery. He served in deployments in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was selected to represent the U.S. Army and provide testimony to the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces in November 1992. Al continued his military education with a 1994 grad-

uation from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS. He served as a State Inspector General for both the Idaho and Guam National Guard for nearly a decade before his retirement from the U.S. Army in 2006. As a civilian, he worked for the Idaho National Guard as a special security officer for the Supervisor Human Resource Office before his current position, as the State equal employment manager.

His strong work ethic and dedication have not only given him a reputation among the delegation of being a go-to-guy when something needs to be done right and quickly, but also have contributed to him being recognized with many honors for his service to our country. These include the Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal; Meritorious Service Medal, 4th Award; Army Commendation Medal, 3rd Award; Army Achievement Medal; National Defense Service Medal, 2nd Award; and many other recognitions.

Lieutenant Colonel Gomez has set an honorable example in how he cares for Idaho service academy candidates and how he has served our Nation. He has created a strong team of West Point liaison officers who will continue his mission of providing Idaho students a chance to obtain a world-class education. We congratulate LTC Albert Gomez on his exemplary career.

Your leadership and friendship will be greatly missed. Thank you for setting such a high standard of outstanding service to our Nation and Idahoans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL WETHERBEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing Sheridan School Superintendent Micheal Wetherbee for his commitment to students' success. Mike was recently honored with the 2017 Montana Association of Agricultural Educators' Administrator of the Year award, as well as the 2017 Montana Association of Career and Technical Education's Administrator of the Year award.

Mike came out of retirement to serve as superintendent when he saw there was a need in the community. When STEM and STEAM learning were just getting a foothold in education, Mike wanted to be sure the school would be on the frontlines. With buy-in from the community, Sheridan Schools are becoming well known for putting kids on a path to success through hands-on learning and experiences. In fact, high school students are now teaching fourth graders how to code. In Mike's own words, "We've got it going on academically."

When asked about the awards, Mike is much more interested in talking about what the school is doing to build a great FFA program and thriving

business department. What excites him the most about these programs, which he has been recognized for, are the opportunities they provide students to leave Sheridan High School and become successful in other places. Mike, who grew up in Montana, understands what service to the community means, and he is doing it every day by building up the students in Sheridan schools.

Thanks, Mike, for your continued work to shape Montana kids into the bright leaders of Montana's future.●

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

• Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, since 2010, I have sponsored a State of the Union essay contest for Vermont high school students. This contest gives students in my State the opportunity to articulate what issues they would prioritize if they were President of the United States.

I would like to congratulate the almost 600 students who participated this year. It is truly heartening to see so many young people engaged in finding solutions for the problems that face our country. To my mind, this is what democracy is all about.

A volunteer panel of Vermont teachers reviewed the essays and chose Marjorie "Maggie" Parker as this year's winner. Maggie, a sophomore at Woodstock Union High School, focused on the need to prevent hate crimes, particularly against members of the LGBT community.

Alaura Rich, a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy, was the second place winner. Alaura wrote about the prohibitive cost of a college education at a time when the United States needs to have the best educated workforce in the world.

Oliver Minshall, a junior at Hanover High School, was the third place winner, having written about addressing income inequality and creating a more equitable and sustainable economy.

I am very proud to ask to have printed in the RECORD the essays submitted by Maggie, Alaura, and Oliver. The material follows:

MARJORIE PARKER, WOODSTOCK HIGH SCHOOL
SOPHOMORE, WINNER

In our current day and age, I believe that one major challenge that faces our country is the prevention of hate crimes against minorities. One group I believe needs specific protection, especially with the new administration, are members of the LGBT community. With the recent military ban on transgender Americans, the LGBT community is feeling singled out and at risk. One way to bring a greater feeling of peace to these fellow Americans is by increasing protections instead of taking them away. I believe two major steps forward to help these people would be a law against employment discrimination for LGBT people, and also a repeal of "bathroom bills" which put transgender people at a greater risk of being harassed for their identity.

Firstly, on the topic of employment discrimination, many LGBT Americans face discrimination in the workplace simply for being open about their identities. In 2011, the