

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,