

A fifth would be serious investigations by Congress—not tiptoe investigations but ones where we take hard looks, ask hard questions, and demand hard evidence.

No one in the Senate has tangled more with Vladimir Putin than our friend JOHN MCCAIN. Senator MCCAIN has tangled with him so often that he has actually been blacklisted from travel to Russia. What Senator MCCAIN said last week is something we should take to heart: “The latest attacks against the FBI and Department of Justice serve no American interests—no party’s, no President’s, only Vladimir Putin’s.”

He also said this: “Our Nation’s elected officials, including the President, must stop looking at this investigation through the lens of politics and manufacturing political sideshows.” Instead, we need to be looking at the situation through the lens of our national security.

Here is what America’s national security professionals tell us. First, they concluded: “Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election.”

I will continue. “Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. Democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.”

They concluded: “We further assess Putin and the Russian government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.”

We went on with this important conclusion in the January 2017 intelligence community assessment: “We assess Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes.”

We know they are coming. We have been warned by Trump’s own appointees that they are coming. Yet we do nothing. Nada. As Putin would say, “*nichego*.”

Well, right now that leaves Congress complicit, but it doesn’t have to be this way, and it ought not be this way. It is not too late to defend our democracy and to teach Russia and the world some different lessons about who we are. What are the things we could do? Well, we could defend our democracy from Russian political influence.

Let’s take legislative action to secure election infrastructure, improve our cyber security, counter and blunt Russian propaganda, and keep foreign money out of our politics. That ought not to be too hard to ask.

Let’s defend our democracy from future Russian and foreign meddling. Let’s insist on the implementation and enforcement of the sanctions against Russia. We passed them 98 to 2 for a reason. Why is President Trump sheltering Putin and the oligarchs from that punch? Let’s insist on the message being delivered that we don’t tolerate

this behavior and that we will deter it with serious sanctions.

Let’s insist on transparency. Let’s insist on transparency about foreign financial interference in our country, through shell corporations in particular, and let’s insist on transparency about the President’s foreign financial dealings and conflicts of interest.

Finally, let’s pass legislation to protect the special counsel from interference and obstruction. I have been a U.S. attorney. I understand the role of an independent and honorable Department of Justice. I understand, as we all should, that no man—not even the President—is above the law. And like many colleagues who have served in the Department of Justice, I expect, as they all expect, that even under the pressure, the threats, and the intimidation brought by the President against this Department of Justice, it will do its job. As FBI Director Christopher Wray recently said, “We expect them to keep calm and tackle hard.”

I see the majority leader is on the floor.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The majority leader.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I was unavoidably absent due to a family medical emergency for rollcall vote No. 28. Had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Andrei Iancu, of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

CONFIRMATION OF DAVID RYAN STRAS

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my disappointment that David Stras was confirmed to serve on the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals.

Mr. Stras’s nomination should not have made it to the Senate floor. For over a century, the Senate Judiciary Committee has used the blue slip process to ensure that the White House fulfills its constitutional duty to seek the Senate’s advice and consent for judicial nominations. Traditionally, a nominee received a committee hearing only if both of their home State Senators returned their blue slips to the committee. Despite receiving only one blue slip, Mr. Stras was granted a hearing, and his nomination was sent to the

Senate floor for a vote. I am extremely disappointed that my colleagues are abandoning long-standing practices in order to fill the judiciary with conservative ideologues.

Moreover, Mr. Stras is yet another judicial nominee selected for this administration by the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society. His name was on President Trump’s Supreme Court shortlist, and although he was not selected to fill the Supreme Court vacancy, outside dark money PACS spent millions of dollars running ads in support of his nomination to this seat. These facts should alarm every American. Our judiciary system, under the Trump administration, is being outsourced to outside organizations with unlimited financial resources that are not accountable to voters.

I urge my colleagues to return to regular order.

OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to speak in opposition to President Trump’s proposal to open all offshore waters in the country to oil drilling.

This proposal has been met with outrage from every corner, as my colleagues are making clear here on the Senate floor today.

I would like to take a minute to remind everyone of what is at stake.

Before the Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez spills, Santa Barbara, CA, experienced the worst oil spill in U.S. history.

In 1969, an offshore oil rig in Federal waters spilled more than 3 million gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean.

The environmental disaster killed thousands of marine mammals and birds. Our local beaches were coated by a thick layer of oil. Tourists were turned away, and commercial fishing operations were shut down, hurting the local economy.

After that spill, California decided that enough was enough. State agencies blocked all new offshore oil drilling in State waters up to 3 miles from the shore. The State reinforced this ban with the California Coastal Sanctuary Act in 1994.

Through a combination of local ordinances, congressional opposition, and moratoria imposed by Presidents from both parties, our State has also fought off any new drilling in Federal waters beyond 3 miles from the shore since 1984.

The Trump administration has now proposed undoing our progress by opening all Federal waters, including the waters off California’s coast, to new gas and oil drilling.

If his proposal is allowed to go through, it would lead to the first new offshore oil drilling leases sold in the Pacific Ocean in more than 30 years.

So far, an exception has been made for Florida, hastily announced by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in response