

the provisions of this chapter from complying with the laws of any State with respect to student loan servicing practices, fees on postsecondary education loans, or other requirements relating to postsecondary education loans, except to the extent that those laws are inconsistent with any provision of this chapter, and then only to the extent of the inconsistency. The Bureau is authorized to determine whether such inconsistencies exist. The Bureau may not determine that any State law is inconsistent with any provision of this chapter if the Bureau determines that such law gives greater protection to the consumer. In making these determinations the Bureau shall consult with the appropriate Federal agencies.”.

(b) EXEMPTED TRANSACTIONS.—Section 104 of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1603) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “This title” and inserting “(A) IN GENERAL.—This title”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in subsection (a) shall prevent or be construed to prevent the provisions of chapter 6 from applying to any postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer (as those terms are defined in section 188).”.

(c) CIVIL LIABILITY.—Section 130 of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1640) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by inserting “and any postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer (as such terms are defined in section 188) who fails to comply with any requirement imposed under chapter 6 with respect to any person” before “is liable to such person”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) by striking “; or (iv)” and inserting “, or (iv)”; and

(II) by inserting “, or (v) in the case of a postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer (as such terms are defined in section 188) who fails to comply with any requirement imposed under chapter 6, not less than \$400 or greater than \$4,000” before the semicolon; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by inserting “, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer” after “creditor” each place it appears; and

(C) in the matter following paragraph (4)—

(i) in the first sentence—

(I) by inserting “, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer” after “creditor” each place it appears; and

(II) by striking “creditor’s failure” and inserting “failure by the creditor, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer”;

(ii) in the fourth sentence, by inserting “other than the disclosures required under section 128(e)(12),” after “referred to in section 128,”; and

(iii) in the fifth sentence, by inserting “, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer” after “creditor”;

(2) in subsection (c), by striking “creditor or assignee” each place it appears and inserting “creditor, assignee, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer”;

(3) in subsection (e)—

(A) in the second sentence, by inserting “or chapter 6” after “section 129, 129B, or 129C”; and

(B) in the fourth sentence, by inserting “or chapter 6” after “or 129H”; and

(4) in subsection (h)—

(A) by striking “creditor or assignee” and inserting “creditor, assignee, postsecondary

education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer”; and

(B) by striking “creditor’s or assignee’s liability” and inserting “liability of the creditor, assignee, postsecondary education lender, loan holder, or student loan servicer”.

#### NOTICE OF INTENT TO OBJECT TO PROCEEDING

I, Senator TAMMY DUCKWORTH, intend to object to proceeding to the nomination of Howard C. Nielson, Jr., of Utah, to be United States District Judge for the District of Utah, dated March 6, 2018.

#### AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have 6 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

##### COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

##### COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on the nomination of James Reilly, of Colorado, to be Director of the United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior.

##### COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled “Protecting E-Commerce Consumers and from Counterfeits.”

##### COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans’ Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 2 p.m., to conduct a joint hearing.

##### SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

##### SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWERS

The Subcommittee on Seapower of the Committee Armed Services is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing.

#### PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Reilly Steel, a fellow with the Banking Committee, be granted floor privileges during the pendency of S. 2155.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Ari Rabin-Havt be granted floor privileges for the remainder of this Congress.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator BLUMENTHAL’s legislative fellow Mary Miller Flowers be granted floor privileges until the end of June 2018.

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

#### ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2018

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 7; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed. Finally, I ask that following leader remarks, the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2155.

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

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator PORTMAN and our Democratic colleagues.

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

The Senator from Florida.

#### RUSSIAN ELECTION INTERFERENCE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I join our colleagues who have spoken about the concern of the Russian cyber attacks on this country.

Every day that passes, we gather new information about how Russia, at Vladimir Putin’s direction, has gone about interfering by committing cyber attacks on this country, not only in its stealing names and personal information but now in its interfering in our elections.

In a long indictment, Special Counsel Robert Mueller spelled out how the so-called Internet Research Agency—a front in Russia—created fake accounts on social media and other internet platforms. It spread divisive content, and it even organized political rallies in the United States with the help of unwitting Americans—all backed by one of Putin’s cronies through a so-called catering company. This indictment tells a pretty remarkable and alarming story, and if you are still not

sure what this was all about, just read the Internet Research Agency's own words: "information warfare against the United States of America." That says it all.

I know there has been a lot of discussion about Russian interference in our elections, and there should be. We have to get to the bottom of this. It is coming fast and furious, and it is going to be happening in the elections this year. We know what Russia did in the last election. Just as the CIA Director and the Director of National Intelligence told us, we know, in their words, that Russia will do it again. The more we learn, though, the more it becomes clear that we are not doing enough to protect ourselves from further attacks.

This is not a partisan issue; it is an attack on the very foundation of our democracy. At a time when it is getting harder and harder to come together as a country—when polarization is so rampant, when excessive partisanship is so evident—what Russia is doing is particularly sinister. It is trying to exacerbate our divisions and undermine Americans' faith in their institutions.

Months away from an election, the question is, What are we going to do about it? We are just days away from an election in Texas and about 8 months away from the November general election. What are we going to do? One thing we ought to do is to start defending ourselves.

Last month, Senator SHAHEEN, Senator BLUMENTHAL, and I wrote to the Secretary of Defense and urged him to use our cyber forces—U.S. Cyber Command, which is the one instructed with protecting us—to disrupt Russian cyber operations that target our elections. We urged the Secretary of Defense to implement the recommendations of the Department's own task force to deter these cyber operations. Those were the recommendations of the Department of Defense's own task force.

Just a few days ago, four-star Admiral Rogers, commander of Cyber Command, told our Armed Services Committee that he had still not been directed to counter these cyber operations and that he needed approval from the White House. The White House, unbelievably, hasn't authorized him to act.

Until the Trump administration starts cracking down on Russia, Vladimir Putin is going to continue to get away with his cyber attacks on our elections and all of his other cyber attacks on our country. Admiral Rogers also told the committee that Russia has not paid a sufficient enough price for what it has done to us to get it to change its behavior.

This is the kind of thing—defending the Nation—for which our cyber forces were created. This Senator is the ranking member of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee. I can tell you that our cyber forces are growing, and they are get-

ting better and better, but they are only good if they are put to work and given the task of defending us.

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter that several of us sent to the Secretary of Defense be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 6, 2018.

Hon. JAMES N. MATTIS,  
Secretary of Defense,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY MATTIS: The Government of Russia, at President Vladimir Putin's direction, conducted an extensive campaign to influence our elections in 2016. The Russian campaign—a mix of covert intelligence operations, disinformation, and propaganda spread through traditional and social media—represents a serious and unprecedented attack on American democracy.

While the Obama Administration imposed targeted sanctions on Russia in response to the attack, just last week, the Trump Administration elected not to impose further sanctions. Yet, Russia's influence activities continue in the United States and elsewhere, according to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. As the 2018 midterm elections are now only months away, there is no time to lose in countering Russian influence through multiple means.

Because Russian influence is conducted largely through cyberspace, National Mission Teams (NMTs), part of the U.S. Cyber Command's Cyber Mission Force, should be ordered to prepare to engage Russian cyber operators and disrupt their activities as they conduct clandestine influence operations against our forthcoming elections. The mission of these forces is to defend the Nation, including critical infrastructure like our election systems, from foreign attack and we urge the Department of Defense to consider employing them as soon as possible.

Additionally, we urge you to implement the recommendations of the Department's own Defense Science Board's Task Force on Cyber Deterrence. The Task Force's report outlined a strategy to deter further Russian attacks on our democracy by threatening those things that our adversaries hold most dear through tailored campaigns of both cyber and information operations. To my knowledge, the Department has yet to implement these critical recommendations.

Defending our democracy must rank among the most important responsibilities of our government, including our military cyber forces. We are grateful for your continued service to the country and appreciate your prompt attention to this most pressing threat.

Sincerely,

BILL NELSON.  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL.  
JEANNE SHAHEEN.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to say that all of us have to get to work—the White House, our cyber forces, and the whole of government. When it comes to defending our democracy, many of us have taken up arms, many of us have worn the uniform of this country to defend it, many of us, in civilian performance of the duties of this government, have likewise performed duties to defend this Nation. We now have to defend this Nation against cyber attacks, and more immediately we have to de-

fend against the cyber attacks to undo and undermine our democratic institutions by attacking our elections.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Ohio.

#### ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGULATORY RELIEF, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise tonight to talk about the bipartisan legislation that is before the body. It is an opportunity that provides significant needed regulatory relief, primarily to smaller financial institutions like community banks and credit unions.

The Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act will modernize the Federal Dodd-Frank regulations to ensure that small- and medium-sized banks, as well as credit unions, can lower their compliance costs, which will mean more loans to small businesses and better deals for their customers.

For years, Dodd-Frank has hurt these smaller community banks and credit unions that have been caught up in this broader effort to rein in a select few larger financial institutions—primarily financial institutions on Wall Street. In effect, these smaller banks were caught in the web.

Last week, I met with some of Ohio's community banks. I meet with them regularly, and they tell me these stories. Their view, of course, is these Dodd-Frank rules targeted at the big banks are actually hurting the little guys. Over the past several years, they have told me story after story about how their compliance costs have increased. A small bank will say they used to have one person doing compliance, but now they have three people doing compliance, and those costs get passed along to their consumers. They also say, with the redtape and regulations and rules they live under, it makes it harder for them to lend to small businesses, which is one of the problems we have today in our economy. As the economy is beginning to grow, we need to ensure that startups and people who are interested in taking a risk and may not have a lot of business experience are able to get that loan to get started.

What has happened is, there has been a consolidation of these community banks because of these costs. In fact, they say one community bank is becoming insolvent every day in this country because of these big compliance costs, but others are consolidating into larger banks. That may be fine in some cases, but I like these community banks.

I like the fact that these community banks are close to the people in the neighborhood, and they know the businesses that are coming to them for loans. Again, it is easier for small businesses to get loans when you actually have a banking relationship. They also are very involved in our communities.