

that even thinks of interfering with the elections of 2018 and those who interfered with 2016.

Finally, I believe it is important for a full-throated apology of the White House to the intelligence community and the American people. I remind you that I do not stand here singularly by myself. I stand here standing on a constitutional democracy which is the United States of America.

Article I powers of this Congress is that we must act. We cannot correct it with a typographical correction—wouldn't over would. The reporter directly asked: Who do you believe? It was never answered that it was the American people in the intelligence community, Mr. Speaker. It was indicated that Mr. Putin gave a strong response of denial, and it was implied in that, that I believe Mr. Putin, and I am not going to answer the question to say that I believe my intelligence community. Therefore, I would indicate it is time for the Congress to act.

SECURITY CLEARANCES FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, this week's stunning betrayal by President Trump, choosing Russian President Vladimir Putin over our own intelligence agencies, begs questions that we should never have to ask about an American President: What does Putin have on President Trump? Is he literally being blackmailed? Do we have a Manchurian candidate as our President?

It is difficult to imagine any other explanation for Trump's constant bowing and scraping at the feet of the Russian dictator or of his refusal to hold Putin accountable for his election interference, even after numerous indictments, including 12 Russian military officials, and even after the arrest of a Russian national who was caught trying to use the NRA as a tool to change U.S. policy toward Russia.

And it is hard to find any other explanation for Trump's constantly calling Special Counsel Mueller's investigation a "witch hunt," even after so many indictments and multiple guilty pleas.

On Monday, our security interests of this country demanded that our President speak out and seek accountability from the foreign adversary who attacked it. But instead, the American people witnessed a Manchurian moment, exposing that President Trump is so deeply compromised on Russia that he is willing to alienate our European allies, to blame our country for the strains in the relationship with Russia, and to betray our intelligence and law enforcement communities by casting doubt on their conclusions and accepting Putin's self-serving denials.

And so the world wonders: What does Putin have over Trump? Now, it could

be some compromising or embarrassing financial information, which would explain Trump's refusal to release his tax returns.

Now, let's remember, candidate Donald Trump promised, if elected, promised unequivocally that he would publicly release his tax returns just like every other modern President. We are still waiting. But Trump's position has evolved to an outright refusal, making him the only President in modern history to refuse to share this information with the American people.

Now, it could also be his nefarious dealings with Russia that Trump wants to keep secret. Now, we know Trump and his family and his campaign had a web of contacts with Russia going back several years. The degree of collusion in the 2016 election is still unknown, but we know that, at the very least, they explored receiving illegal foreign election assistance, and we know that assistance was actually provided by Russia.

Or it could be more straightforward blackmail. We know about the reports that Russia had compromising information on Trump that includes not just financial entanglements, but a sex tape.

Now, I am confident that whatever President Trump is hiding, Special Counsel Mueller's investigation will get to the bottom of it. And that is why I have joined my colleagues here on the floor to demand that the Mueller investigation be protected from political interference and that we let the special counsel's office do its job.

But we should also think about how we got into this surreal situation in the first place. How did a Presidential candidate with such potentially disqualifying baggage slide through the process without a way for voters to know about it? There is a clear public interest in ensuring that Presidential candidates are not deeply compromised or vulnerable to blackmail.

And that is why today I introduce the Protecting Access to Classified Information in Elections Act. It is a new bill designed to protect the national security of our country by allowing Presidential candidates to voluntarily undergo a national security clearance investigation well before the election. Candidates who are granted a security clearance would have the option of publicly disclosing that fact on a website maintained by the director of national intelligence.

Current law doesn't work that way. Presidential candidates start getting classified briefings before they take office, but it is based on an informal grant of access by the sitting President, and voters may assume that candidates have security clearances, but they don't actually have to get one and not all of them do.

By providing an early security clearance process, candidates can provide a real assurance to the American people that there is nothing in their back-

ground, such as financial or personal vulnerabilities, that should prevent them from receiving our Nation's top secret information. And if a candidate chooses not to seek that security clearance, voters can consider that fact, too, when they cast their vote.

An early security clearance would also virtually rule out the possibility that a Presidential candidate is vulnerable to foreign coercion, compromise, or manipulation, because among the things scrutinized by background investigators are tax returns and financial dealings. Investigators would learn if an applicant has been accused of sexual misconduct.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support to this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President of the United States.

A CALL TO ACTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call this body to action. Two days ago, we watched, the world watched in horror in Finland as our President took Putin's side instead of our intelligence community's side. Our intelligence community told us, told him that Russia attacked our democracy and attacked our elections. For whatever reason, President Trump seems unable to clearly state that he agrees with intelligence.

Just yesterday, when he said he misspoke, he then shifted and went back to it could be others. Why? We have to ask ourselves why. The Republican majority has been determined to do absolutely nothing in response when it is clear that there is much that we can and must do. Why?

They have declined to pass additional legislation to serve as a deterrent to Russia and that would sanction Russia if they attacked our elections again. Why? Especially when we have been warned that Russia intends to interfere with our elections in just a few months.

They have this whole Congress, but still Republicans have not passed any legislation to strengthen our election security system to mitigate this threat. Instead, congressional Republicans are trying to cut—this is unbelievable—trying to cut election security grants by hundreds of millions of dollars. Why? Don't they at least want to protect us going into the future?

They have blocked votes to force the President to release his tax returns so we can know whether his business deals are affecting his decisions in the office of the Presidency. Why?

And, most importantly, they have consistently refused to vote to protect Special Counsel Mueller's investigation. Why?

Speaker RYAN controls the floor. Republicans are the ones who put all of