

the Securities and Exchange Commission from requiring corporations to tell their investors and the public how they spend money in politics.

It has been 8 years since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, a decision which gave corporations the right to spend unlimited, unchecked, and—more often than not—undisclosed money on our elections.

For 8 long years, more and more money has flowed from corporate coffers into campaign ads and political expenditures, and Republicans have defended the dark money poisoning our politics every step of the way.

In the 2016 elections alone, outside groups spent more than \$1.4 billion, much of it funneled through trade associations and nonprofits, and much of it undisclosed to the public.

This is elementary; shareholders don't invest in political agendas or candidates. They invest in companies, and they deserve to know whether the corporate executives of those companies are using their money to grow their businesses or to advance political outcomes that are contrary to investors' values.

With no requirement to disclose how this money is being spent, shareholders and the public are left in the dark with no way to know if corporations are spending their money to defund Social Security and Medicare, keep the cost of prescription drugs high, dismantle environmental protections, undermine education programs, or eviscerate rules on Wall Street.

This information is material to how shareholders decide to invest their money and vote in corporate elections. Even setting aside the case for this disclosure as a matter of corporate governance and investor protection, this issue gets to the very core of our democracy.

Corporations can secretly funnel money to organizations that have no requirement to report on their contributions, and then the American public is left with no way of knowing who is advancing what causes.

All of this secret cash and dark money undermines the ability of the American people to hold their government accountable.

Disclosing corporate spending in our elections is the least we can do to help ensure that voters and not dollars set the agenda in Washington.

That is what Americans want. The Securities and Exchange Commission has received a record 1.2 million comments from investors and members of the public in support of requiring corporations to disclose how they spend money in politics.

Moreover, a May 2018 University of Maryland study found that Americans, both liberal and conservative, overwhelmingly support a constitutional amendment that would overturn *Citizens United*. Seventy-five percent of those surveyed support such an amendment. Even more, 88 percent of those surveyed want to reduce the outsized

influence of corporations in our politics.

But Republicans in the Senate wouldn't even let us have a vote on this amendment. What was behind their refusal? After passing trillion-dollar tax cuts for big corporations, Republicans are hoping some of that money trickles down into their reelection efforts. The Republican Congress and this President depend upon this influence being kept in the shadows. It makes you wonder, what are they hiding? What would happen if the American people knew who was really funding their agenda?

That is why they slipped this language into a must-pass spending bill a few years ago, and why they are holding on to it with all of their might today. As long as the American people are kept in the dark, Republicans are better able to hold onto power.

That is why just 2 weeks ago, President Trump's Treasury Department announced that it would no longer certify nonprofit organizations that engage in political activity to disclose their donors to the IRS.

They want to make it easier for big corporations, billionaires, special interests—and even illegal foreign money—to influence our elections.

They don't want the American people to know that behind every bill, amendment, and Executive order is a corporate benefactor. A corporate benefactor that knows so long as the money keeps flowing, there is someone in Congress to do their bidding.

They are so afraid of what these disclosures will reveal that they would not even allow the Senate to vote on my amendment, which does not nothing more than restore the status quo allowing the SEC to move forward with a rule-making requiring corporations to disclose how they spend money in politics.

The fight is not over. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to shining a light on dark money in our politics. I will continue pushing to end Republicans' toxic prohibition on the SEC, which only serves to silence the voices of hard-working American families in favor of amplifying the speech and magnifying the influence of corporations.

In our democracy, the size of your wallet should not determine the power of your voice. I urge my colleagues to listen to the American people who have been loud and clear: They want disclosure, they want to reduce corporate influence in our politics, and they want this government to work for them.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, a short while ago the Senate passed the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act. Here is why I opposed that legislation: It is a national security bill that weakens our national security. This afternoon I want to discuss why.

The Chinese tech company ZTE was revealed not long ago to be a serial sanctions violator. They violated U.S. sanctions against Iran and North Korea, knowingly selling American technology to those countries. For their violations, the Commerce Department dropped the hammer and hit them with crippling penalties, including a fine of \$1.2 billion.

That is until Donald Trump stepped in to save ZTE.

With a speed and a focus this administration seems incapable of bringing to any other issue, the President ordered his team to spring into action to rescue ZTE. He fired off tweets. He made the eyebrow-raising comment that it was a problem that U.S. sanctions were hurting jobs in China. His Treasury Secretary virtually apologized for the U.S. having taken action against a serial sanctions violator. This all comes from an administration putting on a show—constantly tough talking—and from a President pretending that he puts America first. He sure didn't in this case.

Now there are a few sides of this issue for everybody at home to remember—the national security aspect, as well as the trade and economic aspect.

First, I sit on the Senate Intelligence Committee, and a few months ago, the committee held an open hearing with Bill Evanina, the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center. He is the point-man for the Trump administration when it comes to questions of counterespionage and counterterrorism. In response to my question, he told me that ZTE poses a national security risk to the United States.

That was not some outside individual providing testimony. He is not a hearing witness chosen by Democrats. Again, that is the person who has led the National Counterintelligence and Security Center since 2014. He says ZTE poses a threat to America, but his boss, the President of the United States, let ZTE off the hook.

Here is the second issue: the Trump administration loves to tout what it calls new trade deals, but as far as I can tell, just about the only deal they have cooked up with any teeth, the only one that is actually finished, is this ZTE deal that saved jobs—in China.

Colleagues, the President and I don't agree on much, but one of his favorite talking points that I do agree with is that our country has to do a lot more to stop China from stealing our technology and our jobs, but when you look at this ZTE case, he seems to be giving away our jobs and our security.

It is an absolute head-scratcher to me and to a whole lot of other people including Senators on both sides of the aisle. It raised the question are the President's decisions being guided by something else, something other than American interests? That is because the ZTE deal came right after the Trump family secured valuable trademarks in China and a Trump project in

Indonesia got a \$500 million loan from a Chinese state-owned company.

So a bipartisan group of Senators, myself included, said let's figure out a way to reinstate the penalties against ZTE as a part of the annual defense authorization bill, but when it came time to hammer out the differences between the Senate's bill and the House's bill, Republicans watered down the ZTE penalties. Republicans in both Chambers caved to the White House and handed a big gift to China at the expense of American jobs and national security.

In my view, it is inexcusable that the plan put together by Senators on both sides—a plan that would have protected our security and punished a serial violator of U.S. sanctions—was stripped out of this bill. The weaker House proposal that took its place doesn't go nearly far enough to fight the espionage threat that the Trump administration's own counterintelligence nominee testified to.

Bottom line, Trump's ZTE deal is bad for American security and American jobs. The House got it wrong with their weaker legislation. The Senate was under no obligation to accept their watered-down bill. That is why I voted no, and that is why members who voted for this proposal cannot claim innocence when it comes to letting ZTE off the hook for its violations of our sanctions.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, today I am placing a hold on the nomination of Justin Muzinich to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. I will maintain that hold until the Treasury Department provides the Senate Finance Committee information and documents related to Russia and its financial dealings with President Trump and his associates, as well as outside organizations Russia used to help elect him. I originally asked for these documents on May 10, 2017, and have yet to receive an answer of any kind.

I have stated repeatedly that we must follow the money if we are going to get to the bottom of how Russia has attacked our democracy. That means thoroughly reviewing any information that relates to financial connections between Russia and President Trump and his associates, whether direct or laundered through hidden or illicit transactions.

The Treasury Department for which Mr. Muzinich is nominated to serve as the No. 2 official is responsible for much of this information. The Treasury Department authorities include intelligence and enforcement functions to combat financial crimes and threats, including money laundering.

For these reasons, I will object to any unanimous consent request concerning the nomination of Mr. Muzinich.

REMOVAL OF NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am lifting my hold on the nomination of Mr. Jason Klitenic to be General Counsel of the Office of Director of National Intelligence. Senator GRASSLEY and I have received a response to our March 6, 2018, letter regarding the Intelligence Community Office of Inspector General, OIG, and the termination of its Executive Director of Intelligence Community Whistleblowing and Source Protection, "Executive Director." In addition, I have been provided access to documents related to the Executive Director's termination. I remain concerned about the circumstances surrounding that termination and look forward to reviewing them further, even as I work with my colleagues to strengthen protection for intelligence community whistleblowers. My hold on the nomination of Mr. Klitenic was based on these concerns and not on the qualifications of the nominee.

AFGHAN RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I would like to raise concerns about violence perpetrated against religious minorities in Afghanistan, particularly the Sikh and Hindu communities.

One month ago today, on July 1, a suicide bomber attacked a crowd of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus as they gathered to meet with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on his visit to Jalalabad. At least 19 innocent civilians lost their lives, and 10 more were wounded. The attack also claimed the life of Awtar Singh Khalsa, the only Sikh candidate running in Afghanistan's upcoming Parliamentary elections, and Rawail Singh, a prominent community activist.

Of the 19 killed, 17 belonged to the minority Sikh and Hindu religious groups.

I condemn this cowardly and heinous attack and all those like it in the strongest possible terms. The Islamic State in Afghanistan claimed responsibility for the July 1 attack and multiple attacks on civilian targets since then. It is impossible to overstate the depravity of this group that resorts to killing innocent people when it fails to otherwise advance its cause.

We cannot allow attacks such as this on civilians to pass unremarked, nor can we ignore violence specifically targeted toward Afghanistan's diverse religious minorities. Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan have long faced systemic discrimination, economic marginalization, and, as this latest attack only serves to further illustrate, unspeakable violence. Members of Sikh and Hindu communities report facing prejudice, harassment, bullying of children, and attacks from militant groups; disproportionate denial of their rights in Afghan courts; and even interference in their efforts to cremate

the remains of their dead and peacefully adhere to other tenets of their faiths. Only a few places of worship remain available to Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan, many of whom face discrimination so severe that they choose to leave the country.

For his part, Mr. Khalsa's candidacy was a testament to the strength and resiliency of Afghan Sikhs who, even in the face of unrelenting hardship, remain dedicated to their country's democratic future. After last month's attack in Jalalabad, that kind of political engagement has been dealt a terrible blow.

The recent and ongoing attacks against Sikhs and Hindus come against a broader backdrop of sustained violence in Afghanistan. According to recent figures from the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, more Afghan civilians were killed in the first 6 months of 2018—1,692 deaths—than in any other 6-month period over the last 10 years. This figure demonstrates the continuing devastation caused by the past 17 years of war in Afghanistan and the need for the United States and our partners in the international community to redouble efforts toward reaching a negotiated political settlement that can bring this long war to an end. Without peace in Afghanistan, the scourges of terrorist and insurgent violence, illegal narcotics trafficking, corruption, and limited government capacity to deliver justice and other public services will remain, and the Afghan people will continue to suffer.

All Afghans, of all beliefs, stand to benefit from the end of bloodshed. Cowardly attacks against religious minorities such as the one that took place in Jalalabad only serve to damage prospects for a peace that can benefit all.

The Jalalabad attack is also a stark reminder of the sectarian violence facing religious minorities in many parts of South Asia. Across the region, members of minority religious groups are being denied their basic human rights and the ability to live free from discrimination or violence. Attacks like the one in Jalalabad underscore the urgent need for governments in the region to hold perpetrators accountable and to enact laws and policies that foster tolerance, protect minorities' rights, and respect individual freedoms.

America is also home to many Sikh and Hindu communities living in every U.S. State, who, like so many minority groups in our diverse country, have played a positive role in the social, cultural, and economic development of the United States. In my home State of New Jersey, I am reminded every day of how much better off we all are for the contributions of Sikh and Hindu communities to our great State and Nation. This is despite the fact that individuals in the United States of South Asian heritage and representing diverse faiths have faced attacks on account of their identity, including harassment, discrimination in employment and schooling, or even violent