



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2019

No. 75

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our hope for years to come, show us how to live victoriously each day. Lead us to a place of understanding in spite of challenges and difficulties. Lord, make us more than conquerors because of Your power and love. Today, inspire our lawmakers to strive to do Your will. As they perform their daily tasks, guide them in the selection of their priorities. Lord, show them Your truth so they will be instruments of Your purposes. When their light of hope is threatened, renew them with faith in Your providence and mercy.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

MUELLER REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, it has now been more than 6 weeks since Special Counsel Bob Mueller, the former FBI Director, concluded his investigation into Russia's interference in our 2016 election and delivered his findings to the Justice Department. It has been 2 weeks since Attorney Gen-

eral William Barr made the 450-page report public. This investigation went on for 2 years. It is finally over.

Many Americans were waiting to see how their elected officials would respond. With an exhaustive investigation complete, would the country finally unify to confront the real challenges before us? Would we finally be able to move on from partisan paralysis and breathless conspiracy theorizing or would we remain consumed by unhinged partisanship and keep dividing ourselves to the point that Putin and his agents would need only to stand on the sidelines and watch us as their job would actually be done for them? Regrettably, the answer is pretty obvious.

So that is what I want to discuss this morning—Russia's interference in American elections, the special counsel's and the Attorney General's work, and how we can finally end this "Groundhog Day" spectacle, stop endlessly relitigating a 2½-year-old election result, and move forward for the American people.

Now, it bears remembering what this investigation was actually supposed to be about—Russian interference in 2016. For many of the President's opponents, it quickly morphed into something else—a last hope that maybe they would never have to come to terms with the American people's choice of a President. In some corners, Special Counsel Mueller came to be regarded as a kind of secular saint who was destined to rescue the country from the inconvenient truth that the American people actually elected Donald Trump. For 2 years, many of the President's opponents seemed to be hoping the worst conspiracy theories would actually be true. They seemed to be hoping for a national crisis for the sake of their own politics.

Look, I will say it was at least heartening to see many of my Democratic colleagues and the media abruptly awoken to the dangers of Russian ag-

gression. Remember, not long ago, the Democrats mocked Republicans like John McCain and MITT ROMNEY for warning about the dangers posed by Putin's Russia.

Remember President Obama's quip back in 2012, when then-Governor Romney emphasized his concerns with Russia? Here is what President Obama said when MITT ROMNEY emphasized his concerns about Russia back in 2012: "The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back." That was President Obama in 2012. Well, I think many of us now see that President Obama's approach to Russia could have used some more of the 1980s—more Ronald Reagan and less Jimmy Carter.

We would have been better off if the Obama administration had not swept Putin's invasion and occupation of Georgia under the rug or had not looked away as Russia forced out Western NGOs and cracked down on civil society; if President Obama had not let Assad trample his redline on Syria or had not embraced Putin's fake deal on chemical weapons; if the Obama administration had responded firmly to Putin's invasion and occupation of Ukraine in 2014, to the assassination of Boris Nemtsov in 2015, and to Russia's intervention in Syria. Maybe stronger leadership would have left the Kremlin less emboldened. Maybe tampering with our democracy wouldn't have seemed so very tempting.

Instead, the previous administration sent the Kremlin the signal it could get away with almost anything. So is it surprising that we got the brazen interference detailed in Special Counsel Mueller's report or a concerted effort to divide Americans through social media campaigns or the hacking into the email accounts and networks of the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party?

Thanks to the investigation, we know more about these tactics. Thanks to the investigation, 13 Russian nationals, 3 Russian companies, and 12 more

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S2657