

No, my Republican colleagues want to put the Russia investigation in the past, and as quickly as possible. And then in the next breath, of course, at the hearing where Attorney General Barr appeared, we see that they want to return to those thrilling days of yesterday. They say we need to look at Hillary Clinton's emails all over again. That, to them, is a more compelling issue. I think they are wrong. The interference by a foreign power in the U.S. election is the most compelling issue before us, and it cannot and should not be ignored.

The work on the Russia investigation is not over. The Mueller report has 14 criminal investigations that have been referred by the special counsel to other Justice Department components. Twelve of those referred investigations are redacted so we don't know their nature.

There is also the counterintelligence side of the investigation. We need to fully understand what evidence Special Counsel Mueller uncovered about how the Russians were able to accomplish what they did.

A spokesman for the White House said several days ago that he couldn't understand all the furor behind this Russia interference. After all, they just bought a couple Facebook ads. Well, it turns out he was wrong. There was a lot more involvement, and the Mueller report pointed to it.

Here is my concern: Attorney General Barr's actions have compromised his credibility when it comes to overseeing the continuing investigations that were brought on by the Mueller inquiry. Barr's blatant mischaracterization of the Mueller report in his March 24 letter and April 18 press conference, his 19-page memo in 2018 that showed bias on the question of obstruction, his decision to make a prosecutorial judgment on obstruction despite Mueller's view that it was not appropriate for the Department to do so in light of that OLC opinion, and Barr's many stunning statements before Congress have undermined confidence in his independence and his judgment.

I have called on him publicly and renew that call that he recuse himself from those pending criminal investigations and prosecutions that emanate from the Mueller report. At a minimum, he should recuse himself from the 14 ongoing referred criminal investigations, and Special Counsel Mueller and Don McGahn should be called on to testify about unresolved questions.

Why in the world are they trying to cover up this investigation? Why wouldn't we bring Bob Mueller before the Senate Judiciary Committee, for example, and ask obvious questions?

Remember, there are two volumes in the Mueller report. The first volume relates to Russian interference in the election and our continuing concern that they are going to try it again in 2020. Shouldn't it be priority one of the Senate Judiciary Committee to have

Bob Mueller before us, to have the evidence he accumulated carefully evaluated to protect the integrity of the election process in 2020? Is there any higher priority in a democracy than the integrity of an election?

Clearly, there is, and we have seen it and heard it from the chairman of the Judiciary Committee as well as from the Republican leader today. The highest priority for them is to move on; make certain that we don't spend any moment contemplating, considering, or even arguing about what we could do to make this a better and safer democracy in the next electoral cycle.

On the issue of obstruction of justice, I am afraid we are going to be debating that for some time, but I certainly would like to hear from Bob Mueller, directly, what he did find and why he did not reach a conclusion to exonerate the President on that charge. That is a critical element.

Let me say one last word about a recurring theme and message from the Republican leader about how the previous President, Barack Obama, did not take seriously the threats of Russian involvement in the 2016 election.

I think the record speaks for itself. Leading up to October 7, when the President came forward and publicly stated what he had been doing—what his administration had been doing to investigate this Russian interference, he called for a bipartisan commitment of Republicans and Democrats to stop it in place.

There was one voice of resistance, and it came from Senator McCONNELL, the Republican leader. He didn't want to take this as seriously as President Obama did. So for him to blame President Obama for not doing enough is to ignore the obvious. Given the chance, as the Republican Senate leader, he did little or nothing to acknowledge the Russian threat or do anything about it.

Now we should do something to make sure 2020 turns out to be an election we can be proud of, regardless of the outcome. Let the American people have the last word, not Vladimir Putin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the cloture votes on the Reed, Bachus, and Pryor nominations occur at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, May 7; further, that if cloture is invoked on the nominations on Wednesday, May 8, at 10 a.m., the Senate vote on the confirmations of the following persons and nominations in the order listed: Bianco, Reed, Bachus, and Pryor; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions and the Senate resume consideration of the Dhillon nomination.

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

EXPORT-IMPORT NOMINATIONS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of several of the nominations to the Export-Import Bank: Ms. Kimberly Reed, to be President of the Export-Import Bank; the Honorable Spencer Bachus, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank; and Ms. Judith Pryor, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank.

These three highly qualified nominees, if confirmed, will be in a position to ensure that the Export-Import Bank has the ability to provide finance in response to governments, like China, that provide aggressive subsidies and place U.S. exporters at a disadvantage.

The President and his team have recently reinforced their commitment to restoring the ability of the Bank to support American economic interests in global marketplaces.

The Director of the National Economic Council, Larry Kudlow, recently noted that the Ex-Im Bank is needed in the current trade environment, particularly with respect to China, in order for the United States to compete and succeed in international markets, calling it a "financial tool and a national security weapon."

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer has called the lack of a functioning Ex-Im Bank a serious blow to the economy.

Peter Navarro, Director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, has said: "The costs of keeping the Ex-Im Bank on the sidelines can be measured in the tens of billions of dollars of products we fail to export—and in the thousands of jobs we fail to create when this country does not have a fully functioning export credit agency to compete with its counterparts around the world."

It is clear that in our current trade environment, a fully functioning bank could help the United States better succeed in international markets.

President Trump's recent budget submission to Congress notes that the President "supports a fully functioning Ex-Im Bank to implement reforms and help American exporters compete in an increasingly unfair global marketplace."

As President of the Export-Import Bank, Kimberly Reed will be able to draw from an already distinguished career in public service, having previously served as a senior adviser to former Treasury Secretaries Paulson and Snow, as well as on several congressional committees.

During her nomination hearing, she committed to focusing on strong standards of conduct, increased transparency, sound risk management practices, and eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse.

I can testify that she has gone out of her way to make herself available to all Senators on both sides of the aisle to introduce herself and to answer any questions the Senators have and to discuss any reforms and improvements