

to mortgages become more expensive for the American people, and the interest on our debt, which is already the fourth largest expenditure in the Federal budget, will become our largest expenditure. For every 1 percent increase in our interest rate, we are going to spend almost \$2 trillion over 10 years. That is more money the taxpayers get no return on.

Even during the economic boom we were experiencing, our Federal Government could not live within its means. Our Federal Government was set to spend approximately \$4.6 trillion while collecting only \$3.6 trillion in taxes in one of our greatest economies ever.

Now, as we continue to address the coronavirus pandemic, the Federal Government this year will spend more than \$7 trillion and collect much less than \$3 trillion. The market is telling us that lenders are not confident this pandemic is being handled in a fiscally responsible manner. We are seeing the price of gold at a record high and the dollar devaluing, and this is just the beginning.

Now Congress wants to spend more, even though we still don't know how much has already been spent from previous relief packages. What is happening in Washington, DC, is wrong. It is unfair to Americans who work hard every day to take care of their families.

For months, I made a weekly video called "Washington Waste Wednesday" to highlight all the ways Washington is currently wasting taxpayer dollars. It wasn't hard to find examples. Officials in Washington have failed to make the tough decisions that will put our Nation on a fiscally successful path. It is the most inefficient place you can imagine.

These poor choices mean a day of reckoning is coming. If our financial system comes crashing down because of excessive government spending and borrowing, history suggests we will have runaway inflation, with the price of goods skyrocketing. That will hurt the poorest families and those living on a fixed income. With inflation, fixed incomes will stay the same while the prices for necessities go up month after month. For hourly workers, wages will not grow fast enough to cover the ever-increasing costs of goods and services. This happened in the United States in the 1970s.

Let's not forget about the mandatory spending programs that Congress takes no accountability for. Medicare is running out of money. When Medicare runs out of money in 2026, either doctors and hospitals will be paid significantly less or Medicare recipients will receive less care. Medicaid costs are increasing by about 5 percent a year. Social Security will run out of cash reserves by 2035. At that time there will be an automatic 20-percent reduction of Social Security payments.

Our country is like a failing business without a plan. We can't accept this fate.

I ran for Governor of Florida in 2010 because I could not stand to watch the fiscal mismanagement by politicians anymore. Over my 8 years as Governor, we made the tough choices to turn the State around. We grew the economy by over 30 percent, added almost 1.7 million new jobs, paid down almost one-third of State debt, and cut taxes by more than \$10 billion. I was the first Governor in 20 years to actually pay down State debt.

I ran for the U.S. Senate to do the same thing at the Federal level. I was tired of watching career politicians in Washington spend other people's money without a care. Washington seems to have forgotten that trillions of dollars in new spending means trillions in tax increases somewhere down the road. They want short-term solutions regardless of consequences.

Career politicians say they care about you. When they run huge deficits, do they care about you?

When they raise your taxes, do they care about you?

When they overpromise benefits for Social Security without a funding source, do they care about you?

When they overpromise Medicare benefits without a funding source, do they care about you?

Maybe the intentions are good. Who knows? But, unfortunately, you can't pay for Social Security with good intentions. You can't pay for Medicare with good intentions. You can't build a lethal military with good intentions. And you can't open a business with just good intentions. These good intentions have created \$27 trillion of debt that our children and grandchildren will have to answer for. Now they want to spend another \$3 trillion. It is time to wake up.

We can fix this and put our Nation on a fiscally responsible path. We fix this by doing what I did in Florida. We need to focus on growing the economy, cutting taxes and burdensome regulations, and streamlining permitting. We fix this by helping every American get a good job. We fix this with a focus on buying American, with the understanding that buying products made by our adversaries, like Communist China, hurts American jobs and manufacturing and threatens our national security. We fix this by making good trade deals with other freedom-loving countries, and we fix this by getting a return on every taxpayer dollar we spend.

Turning around a failing business is hard. I have done that. Turning around a failing State is also hard—even harder. I have done that. Turning around the future of a nation sounds impossible, but it is not.

If elected leaders don't want to do the hard work—and it is going to be hard—then they should go home. They can no longer hide behind the cowardice of political expediency.

Politicians in Washington are afraid to tell you the truth, so here it is: If we want our country to survive and thrive

and continue to be a beacon for freedom, prosperity, and hope around the world, we will need to make tough choices. We will need to be more productive, and we cannot rely on government programs paid for through more borrowing. We will need to reassert the fundamental principle of conservatism that the private sector and individuals—not the government—should be the driving forces behind our economic stability and success.

As long as I am a Member of the U.S. Senate, I will fight to rein in the out-of-control spending that is putting our children's and our grandchildren's futures at risk.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, history has a way of repeating itself. If we don't learn from the mistakes of the past, we are apt to repeat them. As the November election draws near and as foreign adversaries again seek to meddle in our democracy, let's review our history so we can better identify and prevent future threats.

In late July 2016, Obama's FBI opened an investigation into the Trump campaign that ended up spiraling out of control for years—4 years. The investigation was ultimately based, in large part, on what is known as the Steele dossier, which was a bunch of unverified claims from Russian Government sources. It happens that that dossier was paid for by the Democratic National Committee and by the Clinton campaign.

We know that its author, Christopher Steele, simultaneously pitched those same unverified claims to U.S. media outlets, which then reported on them without even testing their veracity. That is not responsible journalism.

We know that Members of this Senate publicly seized on those unverified media reports to attack their political rivals. They even made references to the "secret FBI investigations" to give the unverified, foreign-sourced claims a veneer of credibility. We know that those unverified claims became part of the focus of a sweeping and unnecessary multiyear investigation by some of the Justice Department's most aggressive prosecutors.

In the end, they found no crime by the campaign or President Trump, despite the dossier's allegations. Also, that shameful and damaging episode was propelled by selective leaks from government officials and breathless broadcasting by the press and the opposing political view.

Of course, now it is undergoing a postmortem. What we are finding out isn't very pretty, and the people behind it ought to be ashamed—ought to be very ashamed.

We have learned that some of those now-debunked claims of collusion with a foreign adversary were actually sourced to that same foreign adversary. In other words, those claims were assessed to be Russian disinformation. Democrats got duped into falsely accusing their political rivals of doing the very thing they were actually complicit in.

We have learned that senior FBI officials had such disdain for President Trump that they pushed the unverified information despite repeated warnings of its flaws. They wanted to believe so badly in the politically convenient narrative that they failed to do their jobs. They lied to a court to spy on the campaign. They leaked memos to launch a special counsel investigation. They even doctored the paperwork—all to advance an investigation rooted in lies, innuendo, and foreign disinformation.

I could go on about the harmful consequences from the hysteria that consumed the last few years, but the lesson from it all is very simple: Our adversaries will do anything to hijack our political differences to sow discord and distrust. Our adversaries want us at each other's throat. So long as we are fighting amongst ourselves, they win.

Why do I bring this up now? Because exactly 4 years later, we are watching the same group run the same play today. If we aren't careful, they will win again. Just like in 2016, foreign sources are pushing unverified material about political candidates; just like in 2016, that material has reportedly found its way into the U.S. intelligence reviews; and just like in 2016, political rivals in Congress and the press are using the unverified foreign sources and their claims to suggest collusion between Republicans and foreign adversaries. Just remember what I said—just like in 2016.

In the last few weeks, Democrats have falsely accused me and Senator JOHNSON of receiving packets of information, including tapes, from a Ukrainian. That is false reporting based on leaks from a letter written by Senators SCHUMER, WARNER, Speaker PELOSI, and Representative SCHIFF, which is itself based on cherry-picked innuendo from classified documents.

This Ukrainian claims that he also sent the information to several Democrats. These Democrats have also denied receiving anything. Again, what is this all about? The goal is to sow as much confusion as possible. The claims are baseless. Neither I nor anyone on my staff had anything to do with him. We never reached out to him or received anything from him. We never received or reviewed anything like what was described in the Democrats' leaked documents.

Here is the rub. But that didn't stop the press from reporting the story any-

way. Remember, 2016, 2017, and 2018? It didn't stop the press from reaching out to this Ukrainian to present him with the apparently leaked classified information from the Democrats' letter.

Let me be clear. My investigation with Senator JOHNSON is based on how the Obama administration formulated its Ukraine policy, which then-Vice President Biden oversaw while his son was on the board of a corrupt Ukrainian natural gas company that was under investigation.

Did the corrupt firm get special access or special treatment because of its ties to the Vice President's son? We should know that. Did the Obama administration appropriately address any conflicts of interest? We should know that. In fact, the American people should know that.

In pursuit of those facts—now, following the leads where they take you, so I say, in pursuit of the facts, we have requested records from the State Department, National Archives, Department of Justice, some other Federal agencies, and the U.S. consulting firm Blue Star Strategies. We have also talked with current and former U.S. Government officials.

Isn't this odd? Apparently, Obama administration records and speaking with Obama administration officials is, to our Democratic friends, foreign or Russian disinformation. Isn't that odd?

As Senator JOHNSON and I noted to our Democratic colleagues in a letter when we answered their letter—if it is, then that means the Obama administration routinely peddled in it as well.

Democrats have suggested that the cause of their concern is Andrii Telizhenko. In March 2020, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee sought to subpoena him only for records from his yearlong employment with Blue Star Strategies—a Democratic consulting firm that lobbied the U.S. Government on behalf of the Biden-connected Ukrainian energy firm. Blue Star also had contracts at the highest levels of President Obama's administration. Notably, Mr. Telizhenko had working relationships with Obama administration officials.

I don't recall ever any Democrat raising concerns about Mr. Telizhenko being a national security threat while he was meeting with the Obama administration, but, apparently, he suddenly becomes one when Republicans ask for records involving his time at a Democratic lobby shop.

Truth be told, the Democrats should know a thing or two about Russian disinformation. Investigative work by me and Senator JOHNSON has revealed now declassified intelligence reporting that parts of the Steele dossier were parts of the Russian disinformation campaign.

I am not aware of the Democrats commenting publicly on this very disturbing revelation. Where is their outrage about concerns of actual Russian disinformation contained in the Steele

dossier and at the same time Russian disinformation paid for by the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton?

The Steele dossier is the very, very definition of election interference, and yet we hear no objection from Democrats. Did the Democrats and the Clinton campaign know that the dossier was filled with Russian disinformation and run with it, anyway, knowing it would cause damage to Trump, his campaign, and administration?

Is Russian disinformation synonymous with Democratic National Committee disinformation? Maybe the Democrats don't want to look under the hood of the fake Russia investigation because—because they would be front and center.

I would like to remind my Democratic colleagues that I ordered my staff to interview Donald Trump, Jr., and Republican officials during my time as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and we did so. At the same time, ask yourself if I ever requested an interview with Hunter Biden. If I did that, how would the Democrats react?

My fellow Americans, this is where we are at now. The Democrats live by the motto "Do as I say, not as I do." Yet they accuse me and my colleague, Senator JOHNSON, of playing politics and engaging in a disinformation campaign.

The hard truth is, it is the Democrats who are engaged in a disinformation campaign all because the facts don't fit into their political narrative. Their silence regarding the Steele dossier and fake Russia investigation, yet complaints about my legitimate oversight investigation, is proof of that.

In conclusion, these recent media reports hinge on the leak of Democrats' classified documents, which they hadn't shared with their Republican colleagues. Only after the stories were published—I want to emphasize, only after the stories were published—were I and my staff able to review the Democrats' documents.

Their letter is full of cherry-picked lines designed to shoo-horn Republicans into warnings of a very real threat that faces all of us. Their letter attempts to cast Republicans as unwitting pawns in foreign disinformation, but it appears that the Democrats are playing the role as a useful idiot for foreign adversaries.

The leaks only further distort the content of their letter. In no conceivable way do the facts support the Democrats' and the media's preposterous narrative.

Here is what really bothers me the most. My Democratic colleagues have known me for a very long time. They know who I am. They know where to find me. And they know that if they were so concerned about what I was allegedly up to, they should have just raised all of those issues with me. This nonsense of orchestrated leaks to plant stories and falsely accusing me of dealing in disinformation based on actual

disinformation that I wasn't even privy to serves only the interest of our shared adversaries. This happens to be the behavior of cowards. And, of course, it should stop. As I started out my remarks today, we have seen this movie before. It didn't end well for those who relied on a disinformation dossier in 2016.

Finally, the truth is slowly starting to come out and the FBI, the media, and the Members of Congress who touted the disinformation look pretty bad today. I started out by saying we need to learn from history—I believe it was George Santayana who said something like that maybe 100 years ago—or you are going to repeat the mistakes of the past. Let's not repeat this history. Instead, we ought to be learning from it. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROMNEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. ROUNDS assumed the chair.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COVID-19 HEROES

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about two topics today. One topic I was reminded of when I was in St. Joseph and Joplin, MO, over the weekend, talking to healthcare providers and volunteers of all kinds who are trying to do what they can to help us emerge from this pandemic stronger than we were to start with.

Certainly, what first comes to mind is the healthcare workers themselves—the medical workers, doctors, nurses, and support staff whom we have relied on from the very first moments that we began to realize that this virus was bigger than any health issue we have dealt with in a long time. We are still depending on them today. At some point someone can run out of some of the capacity and steam that you have to do the job that needs to be done, but we see these heroes continuing to step up, and some giving their lives.

Billy Birmingham, in Kansas City, was an emergency medical technician. He was with the Kansas City Fire Department, and he died of coronavirus in April. His son described Billy as selfless. He said Billy had decided he wanted to find new ways to help people. So he reinvented himself as an EMT when he was in his 40s so he could help others. He was an EMT for about 22 years.

We see the emergency medical technicians and first responders out there saving lives, bringing people into the hospital who are in a desperate situation, infectious, as many of them can be, and at sort of the height of suffering and unable to do much to help you help them, but we see that happening. We are benefited by it, and we see a lot of sacrifice in the community.

There are people such as Heather Black at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Hospital in Columbia, MO. She donated 623 hand-sewn masks for her colleagues and the veterans at the facility whom they care for. She brought her sewing machine to work so that she could make masks during her free time before and after her shift and during her breaks. One of her colleagues said: You have to be just literally awed by somebody that dedicated to helping people. Remember that she is making masks, and between the breaks she is helping care for the patients at the veterans hospital.

We see people finding different ways of being heroes in their communities. Dozens of people in Cape Girardeau, in May, decided to put a parade together for residents of the veterans home who were unable to have visitors. The veterans got to the windows and the dozens of people came by doing what they could to present a Memorial Day kind of parade. There are groups in St. Louis and other places, but particularly the one I was thinking about in St. Louis. They went around and collected food and personal care items, and they took those to people who had lost their jobs, who were suffering from the pandemic, who were isolated in their efforts.

I talked today to a number of people in the behavioral health area who understand that, at moments like this, people who have behavioral health issues have logical reasons for those issues to begin to pile up on them. You are isolated. You are sick or somebody in your family is sick. You have lost a job or somebody you know has lost a job. And those issues get bigger.

Then we see businesses who figure out how to use their unique set of resources, whatever that might be, to make things happen. When we find it hard to get hand sanitizers, a number of distilleries went into the hand sanitizer business. Anheuser-Busch, which is not a distillery but a brewery, used their brewery facilities to produce more than a half-million bottles of hand sanitizer and then they used their distribution system to get those half million bottles in the communities and places around the country where they would do the most good.

Bass Pro Shops, in my hometown of Springfield, donated 1 million face masks to healthcare workers on the frontlines. From delivering truckloads of critical supplies to simply checking on our neighbors, there are thousands of stories to tell in towns across Missouri and in towns in Georgia, where the Presiding Officer lives. There are people doing all they can to make this terrible situation less terrible and this challenging situation less challenging. We are grateful to them.

I know a number of people have come to the floor today to talk about those heroes and how they serve us.

COVID-19 TESTING DEVELOPMENT

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, the second topic I wanted to talk about is that we spend lots of time discussing what to do in this next phase of dealing with the coronavirus legislation. I want to talk about something we did earlier and the results it has produced.

In April, Senator ALEXANDER and I proposed that the National Institutes of Health create a "Shark Tank" program for scientists to develop new technologies for COVID-19 testing. NIH set up that program very quickly. We gave them the authority and money to do it, but they did in a week what they normally would have done in 6 months. They have been working overtime ever since with the private sector and with BARDA, or the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, to meet the tremendous need for quicker and earlier tests.

The Presiding Officer and I talked about this just the other day. The President is right in his view that some of these tests only tell us information that gives us more data. We need tests that are quicker and have an immediate response. When you go get a test and you don't have a response for 5 days, that really doesn't do anybody a whole lot of good. You have been moving around for 5 days, maybe without symptoms, and you don't know that you are continuing to spread the virus. If you had known in 5 minutes or 15 minutes what it took you 5 days to find out, how many less people would have gotten the disease if you had known what you needed to know when you needed to know it?

We need tests that give accurate results in minutes, that are easy to take, and are inexpensive—tests that may cost from a \$1 to \$5 or \$6, that give you an immediate response. So that is what we asked of this program at the National Institutes of Health to work on, to put together scientists, researchers, and engineers to come up with their boldest ideas.

So far, since April 29, 650 applications have been submitted with ideas from single individuals or businesses who say: I think this would work. That would be sort of the starting point. By the way, a lot more than 650 people had "this will work" ideas, but when NIH sat down and looked, they came up with 650 applicants they thought needed a careful look.

Thirty-one of those projects have gone into phase 1 testing. They go through a process of validation, seeing if the likelihood that this will work is as great as what the scientists, engineers, and technologists who populate the shark tank thought it would be.

NIH announced that 20 of those projects would be considered even more closely over a few weeks in phase 2, and just last week, NIH selected 7 companies that would start scaling up production of their technology. Taxpayers are investing about \$250 million to help those tests get out there quickly. These tests could be available as early