and inform the Associated Press that the records were subpoenaed, denying them the opportunity to appeal that heavy-handed play?

Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson put it well:

> The Obama administration has no business rummaging through journalists' phone records, perusing their e-mails and tracking their movements in an attempt to keep them from gathering news. This heavy-handed business isn't chilling, it's just plain cold.

But, once again, the overreach does not stop there. Recent news has surfaced that a Fox News journalist was criminally investigated for doing his job, lawfully soliciting information from a government source. The Post describes the investigation in vivid detail. They used security badge access records to track the reporter's comings and goings from the State Department, according to a newly obtained court affidavit. They traced the timing of his calls with a State Department security adviser suspected of sharing the classified report. They obtained a search warrant for the reporter's personal e-mails.

This assault on the First Amendment is unacceptable and the intimidation of reporters through unnecessary criminal investigations and excessive surveillance raises serious questions about the freedom of the press. The President and the Department of Justice have yet to come forward with credible answers. The American people are still waiting.

Finally, I would like to briefly touch on the tragic attack on our consulate in Benghazi. Much attention has been paid to the internal White House e-mails and changes to U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice's talking points explaining the source of the attacks.

I believe a key question still remains to be answered: Why for 2 weeks did the administration propagate the tale that it was a YouTube video-inspired attack when officials knew almost immediately it was carried out by affiliates of al-Qaida? That is a pretty simple question.

Why were the American people told an anti-Islam YouTube video prompted the attacks when it was known it was not? No one has answered this very basic question.

Instead of providing answers to these questions, a top White House adviser has impugned the integrity of those seeking the truth by decrying persistent questioning as a ''witch hunt.'' It is time for the President to put politics aside, demand accountability from his staff, and step up and do his job.

Congress is doing its part by conducting serious oversight hearings on both the IRS overreach and the Benghazi attack. Yet critical government witnesses—such as the IRS Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division Director Lois Lerner—refuse to cooperate, insisting on pleading the Fifth Amendment during hearings to set the record straight.

It is up to the President. It is up to the President to transform this culture of arrogance and change the above-the-law attitude that seems to have a grip over his departments and agencies. Ignorance, willful or otherwise, is not going to cut it anymore. We simply cannot afford to have a President on the sidelines. This unraveling saga of government gone wild demonstrates exactly one of two things: either the height of government incompetence or gross abuse of power. Rather than sending surrogates out on the Sunday talk shows to claim ''the law is irrelevant'' with regard to that IRS overreach, I call on the President to work with Congress to build back the people's trust.

This includes taking responsibility for the actions of those working within the executive branch, enforcing the laws, and removing all those responsible for this disturbing pattern of government overreach.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

WHITE HOUSE SCANDALS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, this last weekend White House adviser Dan Pfeiffer visited all five Sunday morning talk shows. What he tried to do there was to defend the Obama administration's handling of the various scandals we are all too familiar with. Unfortunately for the President, I think he only made things worse.

For example, he said President Obama's whereabouts on the night of the Benghazi terrorist attack were irrelevant. That is a strange use of the word. Where the President is when a terrorist attack kills four American citizens in Libya, to call that irrelevant strikes me as an odd choice of words.

He was also asked whether it is illegal for the IRS to target individuals and organizations for political reasons. Again, he said, ''It is irrelevant.'' Strange choice of words. In other words, if the American people were hoping that this White House would finally provide straight answers to basic questions, they were once again disappointed.

Let's review the facts starting with Benghazi, as the Senator from Nebraska was just talking about.

Eight months, of course, have passed since four brave Americans were killed by terrorists linked to al-Qaida. Eight months have passed since the Obama administration blamed the attack on a spontaneous demonstration incited by some amateur YouTube video.

Is it irrelevant that we don't know where the President of the United States was on the night of the attack or what he did or did not do to come to the aid of these four brave Americans who were at risk of losing their lives and did, in fact, lose their lives? Is it irrelevant that members of the Obama administration deliberately misled, time and time again, the American people about this act of terrorism? Is it irrelevant that Ambassador Susan Rice was blaming the massacre on a YouTube video the very same day Libya's President was calling it a preplanned terrorist attack? Is it irrelevant that the former deputy to the late Ambassador Chris Stevens has said that everybody at the U.S. Embassy believed from the start that it was a terrorist attack? Finally, is it irrelevant that this former deputy, Gregory Hicks, was punished by the State Department for cooperating with congressional investigators so the truth could get out?

That is a strange choice of words—''irrelevant.'' I don't think the American people believe that is irrelevant—any of these facts. In fact, I think what we can only conclude is that the culture the White House, unfortunately, has created is one where coverups, misdirection, prevarication and dissembling are OK, not being straight with the American people.

No wonder the American people doubt their leadership in Washington and particularly in the White House if the White House is going to create a culture in which these sorts of coverups are OK or, in the words of Dan Pfeiffer, simply irrelevant. When the American people can't trust the White House to be honest with them—and refuses to accept responsibility for their mistakes—it is not irrelevant.

As for the IRS scandal, some people have tried to dismiss the targeting of various conservative groups as a rogue operation managed by a few renegade staffers in the Cincinnati office. Yet the more we learn about this scandal, the bigger it seems.

Anybody who has been around a big bureaucracy—and certainly the IRS qualifies as a big bureaucracy—knows that when you ask the bureaucrats something, the easiest answer is no because they don't get in trouble for saying no. They may not be very helpful or responsive, but they don't get in trouble.

What strikes me as so bizarre about this idea that there are a number of free agents in Cincinnati who decided to cook this up on their own is it really goes against the grain of everything we know about bureaucracies. Why in the world would they take the initiative to target political speech unless they thought they either had the explicit or the implicit approval of their higher-ups? It just doesn't make any sense otherwise.

Last week one Cincinnati IRS employee told the Washington Post—and I think this has the ring of truth—that ''everything comes from the top. We don't have any authority to make those decisions without someone signing off on them. There has to be a directive.'' Now, that sounds like the bureaucracy that I know and am familiar with.

So I would like to ask the White House if it is irrelevant that America's tax collection agency was turned into a political attack machine, deciding that they were the ones who could police political speech and activity protected by

the First Amendment to the Constitution? Is it irrelevant that an agency with the power to destroy people's lives adopted the tactics of a dictator? Is it irrelevant that senior IRS officials learned about these abuses at least 2 years ago and lied to Congress and the American people when we asked them about them?

When I got reports from the King Street Patriots and True the Vote in Houston, TX, and the Waco and San Antonio tea parties in 2011 and 2012 about some of the tactics they were being exposed to, I and other Members of the Senate wrote to the Commissioner of the IRS Mr. Shulman, and Mr. Miller, the Acting Commissioner, and they failed to disclose what we now know is the truth. Senator HATCH, the distinguished ranking member of the Finance Committee, yesterday told Mr. Miller that was a lie by omission at the very least. Certainly it was not telling the whole truth to the Members of Congress, whose responsibility is to provide oversight to the American people of the IRS and of the Federal Government. I don't think it is irrelevant when IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman categorically denied these abuses in sworn testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee in March of 2012.

Furthermore, I don't think it is irrelevant that IRS officials may have committed criminal offenses. I realize that is a serious statement and charge to make, but we know this morning that the director of the Internal Revenue Service division overseeing nonprofit organizations has taken the Fifth Amendment when asked for sworn testimony by a congressional oversight committee.

To refresh everybody's memory, the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution means that you cannot be compelled to incriminate yourself and possibly expose yourself by virtue of your own testimony to a criminal prosecution. That is what taking the Fifth Amendment is.

While she is within her rights to take the Fifth Amendment, if she has a credible fear of prosecution for violating the criminal laws, I believe this elevates this scandal to a new level.

Finally, I would suggest to our friends at the White House that it is not irrelevant that a Texas businesswoman named Catherine Engelbrecht was targeted not only by the IRS but by the FBI, the ATF, and OSHA after she founded a pair of organizations in Houston, TX, known as the King Street Patriots and True the Vote.

I think most Americans would agree that all of this information is quite relevant, quite reprehensible, and something that Congress ought to, on a bipartisan basis, investigate.

I congratulate the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, MAX BAUCUS, a Democrat—not a member of my political party—and Senator ORRIN HATCH, the ranking Republican on the Finance Committee, for the bipartisan way they have begun the investigation into this IRS scandal. What we all recognize, Republicans and Democrats alike, is that this is a threat to the public's trust in government institutions and that this culture of intimidation is not something we can stand for, using the extraordinary power of the Federal Government to target American citizens for exercising their constitutional rights. Indeed, if President Obama wants to know why the American people's trust in the Federal Government has plummeted to an alltime low, all he has to do is look at these two scandals and consider how the administration is handling them.

When government officials consistently mislead, stonewall, and abuse their power, people take notice, they don't forget, and the day of reckoning will surely come.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. SHAHEEN. It is my understanding that I have 10 minutes to speak. Will you confirm if that is correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

SUGAR PROGRAM

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I am here today to speak to the importance of bringing much needed reform to the Federal Sugar Program. I understand that this is not something the Presiding Officer supports and that this is not something the Agriculture Committee addressed in the farm bill. I think it is important to try to address some of the misinformation that is out there.

We have been hearing a lot of talk about the need to protect America's sugar farmers. What we haven't heard is that sugar remains the most tightly controlled commodity market in this country. We currently have what I believe is an outdated program that offers a sweet deal to a small group of sugar growers and processors at the expense of too many other American businesses and at the expense of American consumers.

What the amendment that I have offered with a number of cosponsors will do is reform the Sugar Program to make U.S. manufacturers more competitive and to reduce prices for consumers. It will lower sugar price support levels, and it will reform the excessive restrictions on domestic supply and import quotas for sugars.

These reforms would save taxpayers money. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation would save $82 million over the next 10 years.

I think it is important to keep in mind the amendment we have introduced does not eliminate the safety net for sugar producers. It simply makes some moderate commonsense reforms in the program. Sugar growers would still be supported by the Sugar Loan Program and protected by import restrictions and domestic market allotments. In fact, this amendment simply returns us to the same policies that sugar producers themselves supported as recently as 2007.

Since 2008, sugar prices in the United States have soared to record highs and they have consistently reached levels that are about twice the world pricing of sugar. In fact, the Sugar Program has cost consumers and businesses as much as $14 billion over the last 4 years. This amendment would provide a smart, practical, and pragmatic fix to the policies that are currently in place, and it is a bipartisan proposal. There are 18 other Senators from both sides of the aisle who have joined on this amendment.

Again, we have been hearing about jobs that would be lost in the sugar industry if we make these moderate reforms, but the reality is we are already losing and have lost too many valuable manufacturing jobs across this country as businesses close or move overseas in search of lower prices. We can see some of this illustrated on this chart. These are sugar-using jobs in the food industry, and there are more than 30 times as many of these jobs as there are in sugar production and processing. So we can see sugar-using food and beverage jobs, which is the blue, compared to sugar farming, production, and processing, which is the red. That is 590,669 compared to 18,078. And where do these numbers come from? Well, in fact, they are from the U.S. Census and the Department of Commerce.

Unfortunately, between 1997 and 2011, nearly 127,000 of these jobs, the manufacturing jobs, were lost in sugar-using industries. In fact, the U.S. Department of Commerce has estimated that for every one sugar-growing job that is saved through high sugar prices, approximately three manufacturing jobs are lost. So again, let me put the numbers into perspective, as this chart does. There are less than 5,000 sugar growers and processors in the country. U.S. data shows there are about 18,000 total jobs in the sugar industry, compared with almost 600,000 jobs in the sugar-using industry.

We have also been hearing this amendment would allow for an increase in foreign sugar into the U.S. market. This amendment maintains the current import quotas for each country. Let me repeat that: It maintains the current import quotas for each country. It allows the Secretary of Agriculture to modify these quotas if he or she determines it is necessary, just as they were able to do before 2008. The fact is this amendment would have no impact on sugar imports from Mexico because under the North American Free Trade