

would not have put up with this for 1 minute. He would have asserted this institution's authority and this institution's responsibility—Congress' responsibility, if you will—to get to the bottom of this.

I served on the Iran-Contra special committee. It is not a bad thing for us to investigate an administration that appears to be out of whack, appears to be ignoring the basic tenets of the law, and appears to be hiding information from the public. Forget the public right now. How about the Congress? It is hard to respect an administration that acts like this.

We should be eager to get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the Benghazi attack, and my friends on the other side ought to quit trying to protect the administration when they know these are serious charges. These are serious matters. We have an obligation to get to the bottom of it, and let the chips fall where they may. There were four deaths here of heroes.

All the Members of this esteemed body—whether Democrat or Republican—should demand that Congress' institutional prerogatives are preserved and defended.

As members of the legislative branch, we have the fundamental right—and the accompanying duty—to exercise a lawful oversight function. When any Presidential administration engages in extreme resistance and demonstrates an unwillingness to cooperate with legitimate congressional investigations, we all—not just people on this side—have an institutional obligation to defend our rightful constitutional prerogatives.

These executive abuses matter. The Obama administration has clearly and consistently overstepped its authorities and ignored its obligations under our Constitution and Federal law. This overreach threatens the rule of law, and it undermines the governmental checks and balances necessary to secure our liberties as Americans.

President Obama promised unprecedented transparency that would restore trust and confidence in government. But his administration's lawless actions have heightened the need for more robust and effective congressional oversight.

As even a liberal Washington Post columnist opined earlier this week, "The Obama White House can blame its own secrecy and obsessive control over information" for the heightened scrutiny of its questionable activities.

Oversight investigations are a critical tool that Congress must use effectively to promote government accountability. The Obama administration's escalating strategy of stonewalling, even to the point of ignoring legal obligations and longstanding norms, now threatens our rightful role in calling the executive branch to account.

Indeed, the basic assumption that underlies the Constitution's plan of government, as James Madison explained in Federalist 47 and 51, is that:

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny. . . . But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consist in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others.

The provision for defense must in this, as in all other cases, be made commensurate to the danger of attack. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.

As Madison explained, it is incumbent upon each of us to insist on Congress' right and duty to investigate the executive branch, and to ensure that the administration abides by the most basic—the most fundamental—requirements of our constitutional system.

We owe the American people—not to mention the families of those who perished—a meaningful investigation of the Benghazi attack, not just to find answers to remaining questions but to affirm that this is still a Nation of laws and that the people's elected representatives are still capable of pursuing the truth and holding the executive branch accountable for its actions.

This is a matter of great concern to me, and I am sure it is to a lot of people who are starting to realize that there is a stonewalling like we haven't seen since Richard Nixon.

I don't know that the President has done this personally. I hope not. But he has to look into it.

If he doesn't, then I think it is up to the majority in this body to hold the administration to account, with the help of the minority, and to not have them ignore, disregard, and treat with contempt the rightful oversight that we have an honor and an obligation to do up here. This is really a very serious set of problems as far as I am concerned. I hope the President will get after his people down there.

I think one of the problems is we have a lot of young people in the White House right now who haven't had the experience. On the other hand, some of these things are so deliberate that we can't blame it on lack of experience. These folks know and the people in the Justice Department know. To have withheld these emails the way they did, knowing they were crucial to any investigation, is something we should not tolerate here in the Senate.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning busi-

ness, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO PAT BELL

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to honor an upstanding citizen from my home State, the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Pat Bell grew up in the heart of Appalachia and has spent his life working to better the region and the lives of those who call it home. The Lake Cumberland Area Development District will honor him on May 22 when they name their office building The Pat Bell Building.

Patrick R. Bell was born and raised in McCreary County, Kentucky. Pat was always passionate about helping others, and once he finished his own education he began teaching in the McCreary County school system, rising to the position of school superintendent in the 1960s.

Following his tenure as superintendent, Pat was selected to be the Lake Cumberland Area Development District's first executive director. In this capacity Pat was able to increase the quality of life in the region by organizing infrastructure projects and developing initiatives to increase economic activity.

Pat left the LCADD after 12 years at the helm, but he never lost his desire to serve. In fact, his success at the LCADD led to his next post as the Director of the Lake Cumberland District Health Department. Pat served as director from 1982 until his retirement in 1994, during which the Lake Cumberland District Health Department expanded from five member counties to 10.

His retirement was short lived, however. Never one to turn down an opportunity to serve his community, Pat accepted an appointment to become mayor of Columbia, KY. He then ran for, and won, a second term, which expired in 2010. Although he is once again in retirement, his friends and family know him too well to rule out the possibility of future public service.

Pat Bell's seemingly unlimited capacity to serve others is an inspiration for us all. He truly has a servant's heart, and I ask that my Senate colleagues join me in honoring him today.

TRIBUTE TO JIM SHARPE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to honor the long and distinguished career of Jim Sharpe. Now retired, Mr. Sharpe opened his first business in Somerset, KY, in 1947. Since that time he's opened several more, pioneered the houseboat business, and has become an irreplaceable fixture in his community.

Lake Cumberland is known by many as the "houseboat capital of the world"—a designation that is owed in no small part to Jim Sharpe. Jim was one of the first to pioneer the industry—building his first houseboat in