

PRESIDENT TRUMP'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PUTIN

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, there was the G-20 and President Trump's bilateral meeting with President Putin. While a few good things came out of this summit, overall, it was an embarrassment to our country and our ideals. Clearly, the lowest moment of all was President Trump's meeting with Vladimir Putin, on several counts.

As our intelligence community has concluded, the President of Russia deliberately interfered in our elections and sought to undermine our democracy. That is not Democrats making it up. That is 17 intelligence agencies—men and women, many of whom risk their lives for us every day, people we look up to, people we admire. They are the ones who said there was interference—not Democrats, not politicians. I wish President Trump would stop saying it was Democrats who came up with this idea. It was our own intelligence community. Rather than decisively confront the Russian President on these actions—the Russian interference—the President reportedly acquiesced to Putin's denial.

To give equal credence to the findings of 17 U.S. intelligence agencies and an assertion by Mr. Putin is disgraceful. They are not equal. Our 17 intelligence agencies are far more important to us and far more credible to us than Vladimir Putin. Every American—every American—no matter their party affiliation, should take umbrage with the President of the United States equating our own hardworking, dedicated intelligence community with Mr. Putin, who has shown contempt for our democracy and has spent his professional and political career trying to undermine it.

This almost certainly paves the way—the President's actions almost certainly pave the way—for future Russian interference on our elections. If Russia feels there will be no punishment for interfering in our elections, no reprimand at all from the United States, surely they will try and try again.

President Trump went so far as to float the absolutely absurd possibility of a joint cyber security unit with the Russians. Then he backtracked after he was hailing it as one of the great things about the summit. When he got such reaction—particularly, from Senators MCCAIN and RUBIO, from his own party—he backtracked.

The thought of working with our adversary on cyber security should send chills down the backs of all Americans. It is clear that President Trump is not willing to be the guardian of American interests when it comes to Vladimir Putin. The House of Representatives must step in and fill the void by passing the Senate's tough, bipartisan sanctions bill to finally punish Russia for their intrusions in our 2016 elections.

The Founding Fathers established Congress as a check and balance on the

executive branch when necessary. The House must be that check and balance now.

Given the President's actions at the G-20, there is now even more reason for the House to pass the Senate sanctions bill, which passed 98 to 2—overwhelmingly bipartisan.

Given President Trump's casual dismissals of the findings of our intelligence community and face-value acceptance of Mr. Putin's word, there is even greater cause to tie the hands of this administration with a tough Russia sanctions bill.

Now more than ever, it is clear that President Trump should not have the final and only authority to lift sanctions on Russia. He has shown that he is willing to turn a blind eye to the direct assault on our democracy and did so this weekend in his meeting with Mr. Putin.

Congress should step up and say: President Trump, if you are not going to punish Russia for meddling with our democracy, we will.

The American people are wondering: How can the President of the United States fail to stick up for our democracy? How can the President fail to seriously challenge the man responsible for violating the sanctity of our elections?

Candidly, I am dismayed that the Republican leadership in this body and in the other has been so quiet in the wake of these events. The Republican Party's foreign policy for decades was predicated on opposition to the Soviet Union and now Russia. It was the linchpin of their foreign policy. Now, when a President of their party is soft on Russia—even after Russia blatantly interfered in our elections—we hardly hear a peep from the Republican leadership.

I certainly acknowledge, respect, and admire the words of my friends, Republican Senators MCCAIN, GRAHAM, SASSE, and RUBIO, who have spoken out and should be recognized and applauded for it. They have been the exception, not the rule. We need to hear more from the Republican leadership because this situation is getting ever more troubling.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, a word on the revelation that President Trump's son, his son-in-law, and his campaign manager met with a lawyer with ties to the Kremlin with the pretext of discussing information that would be damaging to Secretary Clinton's campaign.

This revelation should be the end of the idea pushed by the administration and the President that there is absolutely no evidence of an intent by the Trump campaign to coordinate or collude. It is certainly not proof positive—we don't know what was said in the meeting—but these reports in the press at least demand further investigation.

It defies credulity that the President's campaign manager, his son, and his son-in-law, at the height of a very, very heated campaign—three people very close to the President and at the helm of that campaign—were all going to a meeting with a Russian lawyer to discuss Russian adoption. Indeed, Donald Trump, Jr., has now admitted—after he first said the purpose of the meeting was adoption—that he agreed to meet to get potentially damaging information about Hillary Clinton.

The Senate Intelligence Committee has already indicated that it will look into the possibility of coordination or collusion as part of their broader investigation. This meeting and the background behind it should be included in future document requests and additional lines of inquiry.

After providing documents to the Intelligence Committee, Donald Trump, Jr., must also testify before the committee to explain why three of the highest level members of the Trump administration thought it was appropriate to meet with a Russian source to receive information about a political opponent. We are talking about the wellspring and pride of our democracy—free and fair elections without foreign interference.

When the President of the United States is unwilling to forcibly defend our democracy, a violation of our sovereignty, face to face with its chief adversary, when we continue to learn of additional meetings between his campaign and Russian sources, when we hear that the White House is actively working to water down or stall a bill of tough Russia sanctions, we in Congress need to step up and defend the vital interests of our country. Both parties should be united in that effort because, at least for now, the President seems unwilling to do so.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on nominations, which were just mentioned in a noncamera briefing at the White House, I understand the White House is complaining about the pace of nominations, citing the obstruction of Senate Democrats. If the White House is looking for a cause of the delay, they only need to look in the mirror.

No administration in recent memory has been slower in sending nominees to the Senate. In the last few weeks, the administration has sent several nominees without all of their paperwork or their ethics agreements complete. We can't go forward until that happens.

The White House has sent nominees for the Cabinet on down without the paperwork or ethics agreements completed. That is almost unprecedented in its degree. Time and again, they have stalled on providing committees with the information they need to proceed on nominations.

After campaigning on “draining the swamp,” the Trump administration has

sent the Senate a slew of nominees with a myriad of conflicts of interest and ethics entanglements. It is our duty in the Senate to vet these nominees properly because the American people are entitled to ethical government. Yet the White House blames the delay on obstruction in the Senate.

It is typical of the Trump administration to do something wrong and blame someone else for their problem.

Mr. President, I yield the floor for my good friend and colleague from the great State of Florida.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, before the Senator, our leader, yields the floor, will he yield for a quick question?

Mr. SCHUMER. I would be happy to yield to my friend from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. The Senator told about the comments that have been made during the July 4th recess—comments about the healthcare bill—to various Senators.

Would the Senator believe that this Senator had innumerable people come up to him all over Florida, whatever venue that I was in—and I was in public venues quite a bit—and say: Please don't let them take away my healthcare.

Would the Senator further believe that, in visiting the State of an unnamed Republican Senator where that Senator and I ended up in an airport together in that Senator's State, lo and behold, this Senator observed innumerable constituents of that Republican Senator in the airport coming up and saying: Please don't take my healthcare away. Would the Senator believe that?

Mr. SCHUMER. In answer to my friend, I absolutely would because I have experienced the same thing. I was in my State in many areas that are Republican, many areas that Donald Trump carried. The same thing happened. I have not previously seen this depth of concern from people of all different backgrounds, all different economic levels, all different races, religions, creeds, colors saying the exact same thing. People are so afraid of this TrumpCare bill that they are begging us, almost, to please stop it. In answer to the Senator's question: No, I am not surprised because I have experienced the same thing in some of the most conservative, rural, Republican parts of my State during this break.

Mr. NELSON. I would say just quickly, and further, that this Senator gathered up a group of constituents who had written to our office. In this particular case it was the Tampa office, and three of them have been helped enormously by being on the Federal exchange, since the State of Florida has not adopted an exchange. One person who is on Medicaid said that they would not be alive had they not had the sanctity and the integrity of the existing Medicaid system, which covers some 70 million people in the country.

Would the Senator tell me, is it accurate that the Senate Republican bill

would eviscerate Medicaid by taking some \$800 million out of Medicaid over a decade?

Mr. SCHUMER. The Senator is exactly correct. It affects people across the board, including these fine people whom I met at the Utica Boilermaker 15K race.

I thank my colleague for his, as always, astute questions.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Rao nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Neomi Rao, of the District of Columbia, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON pertaining to the introduction of S. 1521 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. NELSON. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I know we are all glad to be back in Washington, DC, at work after a few days back home, and I know many of us are eager to continue our work to rescue the American people from the failures of the Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as ObamaCare.

The failures of ObamaCare are well documented, and while they don't necessarily apply to everyone, particular individuals and small businesses in the so-called individual market have seen a meltdown of the insurance exchanges. The Presiding Officer in her home State of Iowa, I know, has had insurance companies pulling out to the point where people can't even find an insurance carrier who will sell a policy that qualifies under the Affordable Care Act. That is because the Affordable Care Act was, unfortunately, a partisan exercise and a Big Government experiment that has failed.

All you have to do is look at the promises that were made at the time that ObamaCare was being sold back in 2009 and 2010. The President himself said that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. Well, that proved to be not true. He said that if you liked your policy, you can keep your policy. Well, that proved not to be true as well because people saw their policies canceled because they couldn't qualify under the new requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Perhaps the thing that stung the most was the fact that the President said back in 2009 and 2010 that an average family of four would see a reduction in their health insurance premiums by an average of \$2,500. Well, what we have seen since 2013 is a 105-percent increase in insurance premiums under the Affordable Care Act, and so instead of seeing a cut in their out-of-pocket costs of \$2,500, what people have experienced—families of four—is an insurance premium increase of \$3,000. Now, some people may be able to absorb that cost, but most people I know cannot. What it has meant is, they have had to reprioritize their spending so they have less to spend on other things in their life.

We do know, based on the promises made at the time the Affordable Care Act was being sold to the American people, that it has been a failed experiment. So the question is, What are we going to do about it? What are we going to tell the folks in Iowa who can't find an insurance policy or an insurance company who is willing to sell them an insurance policy on the individual market? What are we going to tell people in Texas who have seen their premiums go up by 105 percent since 2013 and have been priced out of the market or who found that the only policy they can afford is one with deductibles that are so high that basically they are denied the benefit of their insurance at all? What are we going to do about it?

A number of my colleagues have noted that even if Hillary Clinton were elected President of the United States, we would still have to be revisiting the failures of the Affordable Care Act because the failures are all too obvious and public and can't be denied, but despite that, and acknowledging many of ObamaCare's failings, many of our friends across the aisle—in fact, all of them so far in the Senate—have made clear they want nothing to do with providing any help or any aid to the people who are being hurt by the failures of ObamaCare. They don't want to lift a finger to help the people who can't find insurance, who can't afford it, and the policies they are forced to buy limit them in a way that they simply have decided to opt out.

So instead of working together with us—you would think they would do