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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

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On June 4, 2020, the Senate committee I chair granted me the authority to issue subpoenas for records and testimony to certain agencies and individuals relating to the FBI's Crossfire Hurricane investigation, the "unmasking" of U.S. persons affiliated with the Trump campaign, and allegations of the political corruption of US agencies. Two months later, after patiently trying to work with these agencies and individuals on a voluntary basis, I have decided to begin issuing subpoenas primarily because of my strong belief that transparency in government is essential and that the American people have waited too long for the truth. Also, because Democrats have initiated a coordinated disinformation campaign and effort to personally attack Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley and me for the purpose of marginalizing the findings of our investigations, I think it is important for me to lay out the history, purpose and goals of our ongoing oversight.

A Senate resolution tasks my committee with investigating, among other issues, "the possible existence of ... corruption or unethical practices ... [and] conflicts of interest[.]" Our current investigations fall well within this authority and have focused on two primary areas: first, allegations of conflicts of interest within the Obama administration related to Ukraine policy and, second, allegations of corruption within the Obama administration affecting the 2016 election, the transition between administrations, and Obama administration holdovers' sabotage of the Trump administration.

My committee began investigating corruption in the Obama administration in March 2015 when it was revealed that then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was violating State Department policy, and possibly section 793(f) of the criminal code, by her extensive use of a private e-mail server for official and classified government business. We quickly uncovered information about how Secretary Clinton's private e-mail server was stored. Based on documents from the company hired to manage her server, we discovered that the method for storing and maintaining the server raised numerous concerns regarding security and preservation of records.

Our investigation also uncovered and made public the extensive editing of then-FBI Director James Comey's July 5, 2016, statement that exonerated Secretary Clinton. We found that edits to Comey's statement downplayed the seriousness of her actions in several ways. They replaced "gross negligence" with "extremely careless." They weakened a conclusion that it was "reasonably likely" that foreign adversaries gained access to Secretary Clinton's private e-mail account by saying instead that it was "possible." And they removed a reference to the fact that she engaged in "an email exchange with the President [Obama] while Secretary Clinton was on the territory of such an adversary." It is important to note the FBI officials who were involved in the editing process: Andrew McCabe, James Baker, Bill Priestap, Peter Strzok and Jonathan Moffa. This was the same cast of characters that soon after initiated the investigation targeting candidate Donald Trump and his campaign.

Soon after the election, President-elect Trump made it clear that he had no intention of pursuing further investigation of Clinton. Since my committee had already issued an interim report on the Clinton email scandal, and she had been held politically accountable by losing the election, I felt there was no longer any need for our investigation to continue. Other than documents we released for transparency and the interim report, we never held a hearing or publicly interviewed witnesses. As far as I was concerned, the case was closed. Little did I know that others were only beginning their investigations and sabotage.

On Jan. 10, 2017, CNN reported that President-elect Trump had been briefed by Comey about salacious and unverified allegations compiled by former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele. These allegations had been shopped to multiple news outlets, who had declined to publish them. But as soon as CNN broke the story about the director of the FBI briefing the president-elect about them, BuzzFeed decided it had a sufficient news hook to justify publishing what became known as “the Steele dossier.”

On Jan. 11, 2017, Ken Vogel published an article in Politico that described a Democratic National Committee (DNC) operative working with Ukrainian officials to conduct opposition research in 2016 on then-candidate Trump and his campaign. The article was largely ignored by the mainstream media, which was being fed an unprecedented number of leaks and a narrative that Russia interfered in the 2016 election to benefit Trump — a narrative that eventually morphed into the claim that the Trump campaign “colluded” with Russia.

The number of news stories based on leaks from “well placed” individuals inside government caught my attention, and I asked my staff to do an analysis based on public reporting comparing leaks in the early days of previous administrations. The results were revealing. On July 2, 2017, we released a report identifying 125 leaks in the first 126 days of the Trump administration. Many of these leaks helped fuel the false Trump-Russia collusion narrative. As FBI Special Agent Peter Strzok infamously described it at the time, “Our sisters have begun leaking like mad. Scorned and worried and political, they’re kicking in to overdrive.”

The Trump-Russian collusion narrative had taken on a life of its own. Gen. Michael Flynn had resigned as national security adviser, Attorney General Jeff Sessions had recused himself from any investigation involving Russia and the Trump campaign, and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein would eventually appoint Robert Mueller as a special counsel to lead an investigation into the allegations of Russian interference and collusion.

The combination of the Mueller special counsel investigation and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s decision to task the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence with investigating these matters effectively shut down my committee’s access to relevant documents and key witnesses. My committee was sidelined, and our investigation was essentially put on hold.

On July 20, 2017, then-Senate Judiciary Chairman Grassley sent an oversight letter to Rosenstein in reaction to the Vogel Politico article. As additional information became public regarding possible corruption within the FBI’s investigation, my committee reinitiated its oversight efforts, sending multiple requests for information and documents to the FBI and the Department of

Justice. In January, 2018, those oversight efforts resulted in us obtaining, and making public, the vast majority of the highly revealing and informative text messages between Strzok and fellow FBI agent Lisa Page.

In early 2019, to help move both committees' oversight forward, Senator Grassley, who by then had become chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and I decided to combine efforts. Between February 2019 and July 2020, we issued a series of oversight letters to numerous individuals, organizations, departments and agencies focusing on reported foreign influence in the 2016 election and the corrupt use of FBI investigations to sabotage the Trump administration. Although we have received some records in response to those requests, the response time has been extremely slow and the information has been woefully incomplete.

Some of the slow response time and incomplete production of records can be legitimately attributed to classification issues and reviews. But I suspect there are other, more nefarious explanations. I don't have polling data, but I doubt anyone could seriously dispute that a majority (probably a large majority) of career bureaucrats within federal agencies voted for Clinton and not Trump.

It was highly unusual, and a serious threat to national security, when detailed descriptions of President Trump's phone conversations with the prime minister of Australia and the president of Mexico were leaked to the press only two weeks into his administration. My committee's report on leaks showed that 62 of the 125 leaks in the first 126 days of the Trump administration could affect national security. That compares to eight and nine such leaks in the corresponding time periods of the Obama and Bush administrations, respectively. Perhaps Sen. Chuck Schumer was right when he presciently warned Trump before his inauguration, "You take on the intelligence community — they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you." Senator Grassley and I are currently learning exactly how right Senator Schumer was.

Leaks of this nature are proof that individuals within the administration, the departments and agencies, have engaged in activities that seek to undermine the president's policies. The unresolved questions surrounding the impeachment whistleblower complaint provide further evidence of this reality.

It is not hard to imagine that individuals who would affirmatively take action to sabotage the president's policies would also frustrate our attempts to obtain information that could shed a negative light on a previous or future president more to their liking — especially if they themselves had been involved in actions we now are investigating. Some may be high-level government officials who are still in a position to know what evidence exists, and have every incentive to frustrate our attempts to obtain it. Regardless of the cause, the slow-walking of producing documents for our investigation delayed our efforts and has prompted me to begin issuing subpoenas.

In August 2019, a whistleblower initiated a complaint with the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) and the Intelligence Community Inspector General. The cooperation between HPSCI and the whistleblower remains murky, particularly in light of

HPSCI Chairman Adam Schiff's initial denial that his committee had contact with the whistleblower prior to the filing of the complaint — a statement Schiff later admitted was false. We do know from public reporting that there were connections between the whistleblower, an impeachment witness, and their former colleagues who “coincidentally” left the executive branch and joined HPSCI staff around the time the whistleblower complaint was filed. Unfortunately, those connections, and any effect they might have had on the filing or pursuit of the complaint, have never been adequately explored.

My personal knowledge of the events involving Ukraine and the allegations that led to impeachment were detailed in my Nov. 18, 2019, 10-page letter to HPSCI Ranking Member Devin Nunes and U.S. Rep. Jim Jordan. While the Democrats' narrative of the president's wrongdoing consumed the media's attention, the public grew increasingly curious about the facts and circumstances surrounding former Vice President Biden's Ukraine responsibilities and the very obvious conflict of interest posed by his son, Hunter Biden, serving as a member of the board of Burisma — a Ukrainian gas company owned by an individual who is generally viewed as highly corrupt. Because Chairman Grassley and I were already looking into allegations involving a Democratic National Committee operative and certain Ukrainian individuals, we were not going to turn a blind eye to this.

We didn't target Joe and Hunter Biden for investigation; their previous actions had put them in the middle of it.

Many in the media, in an ongoing attempt to provide cover for former Vice President Biden, continue to repeat the mantra that there is “no evidence of wrongdoing or illegal activity” related to Hunter Biden's position on Burisma's board. I could not disagree more. A brief summary of the timeline of events in Ukraine will support my assessment.

Ukraine gained its independence with the fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991. Three years later, in December 1994, Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, in which Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in exchange for assurances against the threat or use of force against its territorial integrity or political independence.

Unfortunately, shedding the legacy of Soviet totalitarianism and corruption is not an easy task. In late 2004 and early 2005, in what became known as the Orange Revolution, large protests over widespread election fraud and voter intimidation led to the overturning of the Ukrainian presidential election. Roughly 10 years later, a series of protests led by a coalition of pro-western and anti-corruption advocates resulted in what is called the Revolution of Dignity. On Feb. 22, 2014, Ukraine's president, Victor Yanukovich, widely viewed as the puppet of Russian President Vladimir Putin, abdicated his office by fleeing to Russia.

This is where the Ukrainian story of Vice President Biden and his son, Hunter, begins. Following the Revolution of Dignity, U.S. foreign policy was focused on support for the pro-western, anti-corruption, and pro-democracy efforts in Ukraine. Unfortunately, Putin had a much different plan. Congress and the Obama administration were acutely aware of Putin's displeasure and his penchant for destabilizing governments not to his liking. As a result, U.S.

foreign policy toward Ukraine focused on two main objectives: 1) security and economic assistance, and 2) advocacy for and support of anti-corruption, judicial, and other reforms.

On April 16, 2014, Vice President Biden met with his son's business partner, Devon Archer, at the White House. Five days later, Vice President Biden visited Ukraine, and the media described him as the "public face of the administration's handling of Ukraine." The next day, April 22, Archer joined the board of Burisma. Six days later, British officials seized \$23 million from the London bank accounts of Burisma's owner, Mykola Zlochevsky. Fifteen days later on May 13, Hunter Biden joined the board of Burisma, with public reports showing Hunter and his firm being paid \$50,000 to \$166,000 per month (totaling more than \$3 million over five years) for his and Archer's board participation.

All of this initial activity in Ukraine involving the Bidens, Hunter's business partner, and a corrupt oligarch and his Ukrainian gas company occurred over a period of less than a month, and within three months of the Revolution of Dignity — a revolution against corruption in Ukraine. Following that revolution, Ukrainian political figures were desperate for U.S. support. Zlochevsky would have made sure relevant Ukrainian officials were well aware of Hunter's appointment to Burisma's board. Isn't it obvious what message Hunter's position on Burisma's board sent to Ukrainian officials? The answer: If you want U.S. support, don't touch Burisma. It also raised a host of questions, including:

- 1) How could former Vice President Biden look any Ukrainian official (or any other world leader) in the face and demand action to fight corruption?
- 2) Did this glaring conflict of interest affect the work and efforts of other U.S. officials who worked on anti-corruption measures?
- 3) Did Burisma, its owner, or representatives receive special access to, or treatment from, U.S. agencies or officials because of Hunter Biden's role on the board of directors?
- 4) Was there anything corrupt or unethical about the financial transactions between Hunter Biden and Burisma?
- 5) How did State Department officials responsible for promoting anti-corruption measures in Ukraine react to Hunter Biden joining Burisma's board of directors?
- 6) Exactly when, and for what reasons, did the U.S. government decide to condition a \$1 billion loan guarantee for Ukraine on the termination of Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin?
- 7) What was the reaction within the Obama administration when the replacement prosecutor general, Yuri Lutsenko, closed the case investigation of Burisma and its owner? Did Vice President Biden and other U.S. government officials believe that justice had been served and their anti-corruption efforts were successful?

In addition, the appearance of family profiteering off of Vice President Biden's official

responsibilities is not unique to the circumstances involving Ukraine and Burisma. Public reporting has also shown Hunter Biden following his father into China and coincidentally landing lucrative business deals and investments there. Additionally, the former vice president's brothers and sister-in-law, Frank, James and Sara Biden, also are reported to have benefited financially from his work as well. We have not had the resources to devote investigatory time to these other allegations, but I point them out to underscore that Ukraine and Burisma seem more of a pattern of conduct than an aberration. Given all this public information, the press should be asking, and former Vice President Biden should be answering, a long list of questions:

- 1) Why did you meet with Devon Archer at the White House on April 16, 2014? What was discussed? Did you discuss anything related to Ukraine, Hunter Biden, or Burisma?
- 2) Were you aware that Devon Archer joined the board of Burisma six days later?
- 3) Were you aware that Burisma's owner, Mykola Zlochevsky, was generally viewed as a corrupt oligarch and that his London bank account containing \$23 million had been seized by British officials only 15 days before Hunter Biden joined the board of a company he owned?
- 4) Was Hunter Biden aware that British officials had seized Zlochevsky's bank account?
- 5) When did you first become aware of Zlochevsky's and Burisma's reputations for corruption?
- 6) Do you believe Zlochevsky and Burisma are corrupt?
- 7) Were you aware in April 2014 that Hunter Biden joined the board of Burisma?
- 8) When did you first become aware that Hunter Biden joined the board of Burisma?
- 9) When did you first become aware of how much Hunter Biden was being compensated by Burisma?
- 10) Why do you believe Burisma recruited and paid Archer and your son to be on its board?
- 11) What skills or knowledge do you believe Hunter Biden possesses that qualified him to be on Burisma's board and receive \$50,000 to \$166,000 per month for his and his partner's services?
- 12) What exactly had Shokin done that caused you to threaten to withhold \$1 billion in desperately needed aid from Ukraine if President Poroshenko didn't fire him?
- 13) What do you know about Hunter Biden's business dealings in China?
- 14) What do you know about financial benefits your brothers and sister-in-law have obtained because of their relationship to you?

Democrats and many in the media have mainly focused their criticism of our investigation on the Biden component of our oversight. This is understandable in light of their almost maniacal devotion to ending the Trump presidency. In their current attempt to circle the wagons around Biden, they have once again decided to weaponize a false “Russian disinformation” narrative as a tool for attacking their political opponents. As Chairman Grassley and I have pointed out in rebuttals to their unfounded accusations, it is Democrats who have sought out and disseminated Russian disinformation. It was the Democratic National Committee, together with cutouts for the Clinton campaign, that paid for and helped peddle the Steele dossier. And now, once again, Democrats are falsely accusing Chairman Grassley and me of the very behavior they themselves are engaging in.

They have introduced, and made public, Russian disinformation into our investigatory record; we have not.

In December 2019, Department of Justice Inspector General Michael Horowitz issued a 478-page report on his investigation of the FBI’s Crossfire Hurricane investigation and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant abuse. For anyone who is willing to take the time, the report is a devastating account of investigative and prosecutorial negligence, misconduct, and abuse of the FISA court process by FBI and Department of Justice officials. Some of the most disturbing revelations include an FBI attorney doctoring and using an email to mislead the FISA court, ignoring the exculpatory evidence obtained during surreptitious recordings of campaign officials, deciding not to provide a defensive briefing to the Trump campaign, planting an FBI investigator in an intelligence briefing for candidate Trump, and withholding known and significant credibility problems related to the Steele dossier.

Shortly after the publication of Horowitz’s FISA report, a member of my staff was reviewing classified sections of it when he discovered four footnotes that contradicted statements by FBI officials in the unclassified section of the report. When I reviewed these footnotes, I immediately decided that the public had the right to see them, and we began the process to get them declassified. Attorney General William Barr and then-Acting Director of National Intelligence Richard Grenell both deserve much credit for making this information available to the public.

The significance of the footnotes is hard to overstate, although many in the media simply shrugged them off. Bill Priestap, the deputy FBI director for counterintelligence who was “ultimately responsible” for Crossfire Hurricane, had told IG investigators that the FBI “didn’t have any indication whatsoever” that Steele’s dossier was part of a Russian disinformation campaign. However, the footnotes revealed that the FBI received intelligence reporting between October 2016 and February 2017 showing that parts of the Steele dossier were, in fact, part of a Russian disinformation campaign. This was critical exculpatory evidence that undermined the very premise of the investigation.

But as the FBI had done since the beginning of the Crossfire Hurricane investigation, rather than using exculpatory information to end their investigation, the FBI ramped it up. Confidential human sources became FISA wiretaps; top FBI officials argued for inclusion of the unverified

and salacious Steele dossier to be included in the body of the Obama administration's Intelligence Community Assessment, and finally, the FBI investigation ballooned into a special counsel investigation. As a result, the Trump administration was tormented for over two years by an aggressive investigation and media speculation, all based on a false narrative. This has taken a tremendous toll on our country.

Had the public known what the FBI knew at that time about its Trump-Russia inquiry, it's hard to imagine public support for continuing the investigation, much less the appointment of a special counsel four months later. Investigations into Russian hacking, Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen could have — and should have — continued using normal FBI and Department of Justice procedures. But with a sufficiently informed public, and an FBI and Department of Justice that rigorously followed their own procedures, this national political nightmare could have been avoided.

Which raises the question: Why wasn't the public properly informed? Some of the reasons are now obvious; some are speculative. What is obvious is that certain FBI and Justice officials were not truthful. Also, as this committee found, leaks during the first four months of the Trump administration helped fuel the false narrative of Trump campaign collusion with Russia. Many in the media were either duped by, or complicit in, using those leaks to perpetuate that false narrative.

Much evidence of corruption by Obama administration officials has already been made public, but only a mere portion of it is described above. The role of other Obama administration officials and members of the intelligence community is murky — but legitimate suspicions and questions remain and must be answered. These include:

- 1) Why were so many top level Obama administration officials, including Vice President Biden, unmasking Trump campaign and transition officials? Some of the unmasking occurred only 10 days before President Trump's inauguration?
- 2) Did the FBI's use of campaign and transition briefings for investigative purposes, as well as its efforts to access presidential transition records, violate the law or otherwise undermine faith in the peaceful transfer of power?
- 3) What other intelligence reporting did the FBI's Crossfire Hurricane team ignore?
- 4) Did any of these abuses precede the formal opening of Crossfire Hurricane?
- 5) And of course, the overarching question: Who knew what, and when did they know it?

On July 20, 2020, reports began surfacing falsely accusing Senator Grassley and me of accepting Russian disinformation in the course of our investigations. The implication was that we were being duped into disseminating derogatory information on former Vice President Biden because Russia does not want to see him become president. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, Minority Leader Schumer and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Vice

Chair Mark Warner wrote a letter, parroting a letter our ranking members, Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Gary Peters, had written to us asking for a classified briefing on these developments.

The only problem with their overblown handwringing is that they all knew full well that we have been briefed repeatedly, and we had already told them that we had NOT received the alleged “Russian disinformation.” The very transparent goal of their own disinformation campaign and feigned concern is to attack our character in order to marginalize the eventual findings of our investigation. They are running the same play, out the same playbook they have been using for the last three and a half years.

What I have provided above is an accurate history, summary and rationale of our investigatory efforts. Everything detailed above is already in the public realm. None of it is Russian disinformation. But it is a stunning description of wrongdoing and corruption that the public has every right to know.

As our investigation continues, more will be uncovered and revealed. As always, almost all of the documents we are seeking and will make public are from U.S. sources. Everything will be carefully verified for accuracy and veracity.

Chairman Grassley and I will not be deterred by the false accusations despicably being made by individuals with strong political biases and motivations. Our investigation has been, and will continue to be, undertaken with the greatest integrity and transparency. We intend to determine and reveal the truth.

An addendum:

On the morning of Saturday, Aug. 8, I noticed an opinion piece in the Washington Post submitted by Sen. Richard Blumenthal. It was headlined: *“The threat to U.S. elections is real, and frightening. The public has a right to know.”* In addition to my curiosity being peaked by the hyperbolic headline, I was curious to read what “stunning revelations” Senator Blumenthal might provide.

What I found corroborated what I have described above about a coordinated effort to attack me to pre-emptively marginalize the findings of our investigations. This paragraph in particular needs to be responded to:

“On Wednesday, The Post reported that Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, is moving ahead with an investigation into presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden’s family using documents provided to the senator by the son of a former KGB officer. Johnson’s actions are of such concern to the CIA, according to news reports, that the agency has refused to brief him. Think of it: Congress may become a forum for debunked conspiracy theories peddled by Kremlin proxies.”

Let me first refute the specific false charges.

Senator Blumenthal claimed my committee is “*using documents provided to the senator by the son of a former KGB officer.*” This is false. Not only have we repeatedly and publicly denied it, no one has presented evidence to the contrary — nor can they, because there is none.

On July 1, the Washington Post reported false allegations that a Ukrainian named Oleksandr Onyshchenko provided our committee with information. Our Democratic colleagues asked that day if it was true, and we quickly and unequivocally denied it. On July 23, Politico reported that Andrii Derkach provided our committee with information. We immediately and unequivocally denied that. My press team has shared these denials with many reporters. And yet, for nearly a month, these baseless allegations have been repeated. Saturday morning, they were repeated by Senator Blumenthal. Why do the press and Democrats continue to ignore these unequivocal denials? Have they no interest in the truth?

Let me be clear: The investigation by my committee of allegations of conflicts of interest within the Obama administration related to Ukraine policy and of allegations of corruption within the Obama administration affecting the 2016 election is focused on documents and officials from U.S. government agencies and a U.S. Democrat-linked lobbying firm. We have not taken, nor do we possess, the documents from Ukrainians that Democrats keep claiming.

Blumenthal then writes, “Johnson’s actions are of such concern to the CIA, according to news reports, that the agency has refused to brief him.” Not only is this claim false, it is a perfect demonstration of the disinformation technique they are using.

We have been briefed repeatedly on these issues, but because the briefings did not support their preferred narrative, Democrats haven’t liked what they’ve heard. Ranking Member Sen. Gary Peters asked me to arrange yet another intelligence briefing, which I requested from the FBI and CIA. The CIA and FBI responded that they had provided all relevant information. Democrats then moved the goalposts, asking the CIA for yet another briefing on other less relevant questions. The CIA has not responded, and Democrats have not pursued the matter since May.

In addition, note Senator Blumenthal’s use of the term, “*according to news reports.*” This reveals exactly what is happening here. An “intelligence product” full of false innuendo was produced, classified, and then leaked to the press more than a week before Senator Grassley or I were given access to it. Many in the media dutifully reported this hot tip. Democrats then used the media reports to repeat, distort, and embellish the false charges. Sound familiar?

Now I know exactly how President Trump must have felt when he first heard the false reports contained in the “Steele dossier” and allegations that his campaign colluded with Russia. He knew these narratives were completely false — and now so do we, thanks to the Mueller report — yet they were repeated, distorted, and embellished to create the public demand for that special counsel investigation.

It is neither me, Chairman Grassley, nor our committees that are being used to disseminate Russian disinformation. Instead, it is Democrats and the media that have been doing Russian President Vladimir Putin’s work for him. Puppet masters in the Kremlin could not be more pleased at the political division and discord that has been driven by the resistance movement

against President Trump. Remember the tweet only 10 days after President Trump's inauguration from one of the impeachment whistleblower's attorneys, Mark Zaid: "#coup has started. First of many steps. #rebellion. #impeachment will follow ultimately. #lawyers"

The left is relentless. They play for keeps, and they don't let rules or the truth get in their way.

Now many of the same players that engineered a special counsel and impeachment against President Trump are brazenly teaming up again with a different target in mind: me. They are using the same tired old canard of Russian interference. You'd think they could come up with something better than that, but here they are, confident they can pull it off again. And with a compliant media, why wouldn't they be confident?

Let me be very clear on another point. I have no doubt Russia is continuing its efforts to sow discord and destabilize countries and political systems throughout the world, including here in the U.S. In Congress, I was one of the first to recognize Russia's menacing activities by holding three hearings related to Russian disinformation and destabilization campaigns as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Europe subcommittee back in 2015. This is how the former Soviet Union behaved, and it should surprise no one that the Russian Federation under the leadership of Putin would engage in the exact same type of behavior. What is surprising is that anyone would view this as some breakthrough revelation. I certainly do not condone it, nor do I lack an understanding of the type of threat this poses to our democracy. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, I am well aware of the significant efforts the Department of Homeland Security and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency have undertaken to safeguard our elections. Congress has also appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars and provided grants to the states to counter these threats.

But I also try to put the threat of Russian election interference in proper perspective, to realize we face far greater threats as a nation, and to completely reject Democrats' successful and repeated efforts at weaponizing persistent Russian meddling to gain political advantage and destroy individual reputations.

The only way I can counter these personal political attacks is to tell the truth and continue to conduct my committee's investigations with the utmost integrity and transparency. Let me repeat. We will not be deterred by these coordinated and despicably false attacks. We intend to uncover the truth and make it public.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman