

An open letter

PROGRESSIVE VIEWS



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TO: Kendall County's representatives in the US Congress: Sen. John Cornyn, Sen. Ted Cruz, Rep. Chip Roy SUBJ: Time to Act

Reports from multiple sources on the first weekend in January asserted that the FBI opened a counterintelligence investigation into whether Pres. Trump was working on behalf of a foreign government. Another report detailed the extraordinary measures the President took (including confiscating notes from a translator) to conceal details about his multiple private meetings with the leader of our principal foreign adversary, Vladimir Putin.

Mr. Putin now knows the desperation of Mr. Trump to keep the details on these meetings secret. In terms of security and intelligence, this gives the Russian government leverage over our own President.

As David Laufman, former chief of the counterintelligence section at the Department of Justice, tweeted recently, "Now is the time for all good men (and women) to come to the aid of their country."

As our representatives in Congress, with its constitutionally mandated oversight authority, you have a responsibility to act on this evidence. This open letter is my call for you to act on that responsibility. If you remain silent – or utter useless words or take no action or worse, defend his actions – you are complicit.

The evidence continues to grow about the contact between Russia and its agents with the President and his associates. This evidence is in the public record, from charging documents, news reporting and public actions of the special counsel.

On its own, "the unbelievable acquiescence to Vladimir Putin in Helsinki" (per Mr. Laufman), when the President dismissed his own intelligence officials in favor of Putin's denials of interference, raises multiple alarm bells.

Reports also suggested that at multiple times in 2018,

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the President floated the idea of withdrawing from NATO, one of Putin's major, if not overarching, political goals. Such a withdrawal "would be one of the most damaging things that any president could do to US interests," said Michèle Flournoy, an undersecretary of defense under President Obama.

On Jan. 22, most House Republicans and all Democrats – the vote was 357-22 – passed a bill to prohibit the administration from using federal funds to withdraw from NATO. Members of both parties made fervent speeches on the importance of the alliance.

President Trump often parrots talking points used only by Russia (such as "the reason Russia was in Afghanistan was because terrorists were going into Russia," and "Montenegro is a tiny country with ... very aggressive people"). Why is the leader of the United States repeating lines used by only a Russian autocrat?

Might the President be making all these points at the direct behest of Mr. Putin during these private meetings? The US government and public has no way to know.

Mr. Laufman said recently, "It's a painful, anguishing thing to acknowledge that the President of the United States is a clear and present danger to the national security of the United States."

I am also concerned about your silence – with a few exceptions – on actions the President takes that are directly in contravention of the interests of Texas. These issues include the border wall and the manufactured "national emergency," actions taken against Mexico – Texas' largest trading partner by far – the citizenship question on the 2020 Census, which would underrepresent the population of Texas, and floating the idea of poaching disaster relief funding to fund the aforementioned border wall. (Sen. Cornyn, to your credit, you came out early and strong against this idea.)

And Rep. Roy: I specifically call you out on two unconscionable "no" votes in January: one, to deny back pay to federal workers furloughed by the government shutdown. All 411 other members (most Republicans included) voted "yes," the Senate passed it unanimously, and the President indicated he would sign it. The second was your "no" vote in the aforementioned bill against leaving NATO. Both votes are inexcusable.

It is well past time for you to act. I – and many others – demand that you do so.

Laura Bray is a leader in the Kendall County Democratic Party.