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MINNESOTA

COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE  
JUDICIARY  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2018

Commissioner Caroline C. Hunter, Chair  
Commissioner Ellen L. Weintraub, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Matthew S. Petersen  
Commissioner Steven T. Walther  
Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street NE Washington, D.C. 20463

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to express concern about the deadlocked decision on May 25, 2018 that blocks the Commission from moving forward on a rulemaking to prevent foreign spending in U.S. elections without detection. This decision should be revisited and approved as a necessary step towards protecting our future elections.

With bipartisan agreement, the Senate Intelligence Committee determined that foreign actors illegally influenced the 2016 presidential election and that something must be done to stop this from occurring again. Senator Burr, Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, stated that “[t]here is no doubt that Russia undertook an unprecedented effort to interfere with our 2016 elections.”<sup>1</sup> This followed the Department of Justice’s February announcement that a Grand Jury indicted thirteen Russians for “committing federal crimes while seeking to interfere in the United States political system, including the 2016 Presidential election.”<sup>2</sup> Secretary Nielsen of the Department of Homeland Security stated that “we see [Russia] continuing to conduct foreign influence campaigns” when asked about the 2018 election cycle.<sup>3</sup>

Intelligence officials have also confirmed that Russia purchased thousands of political advertisements during the 2016 election. Indictments by the Department of Justice show that Russian actors were spending \$1.25 million dollars per month to purchase advertisements in the run up to the 2016 election.<sup>4</sup> Evidence continues to grow that Russia not only attempted to

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Zengerle, Chizu Nomiyama, Bill Berkrot. “Key senators: ‘no doubt’ Russia sought to interfere in U.S. election”. *Reuters*, 5/18/18, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-russia-committee/key-senators-no-doubt-russia-sought-to-interfere-in-u-s-election-idUSKCN1IH2AX>

<sup>2</sup> “Grand Jury Indicts Thirteen Russian Individuals and Three Russian Companies for Scheme to Interfere in the United States Political System”. *Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs*, 2/16/18, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/grand-jury-indicts-thirteen-russian-individuals-and-three-russian-companies-scheme-interfere>.

<sup>3</sup> David Shepardson, Bill Berkrot. “U.S. officials warn Congress on election hacking threats”. *Reuters*, 5/22/18, <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-election-security/u-s-officials-warn-congress-on-election-hacking-threats-idUSL2N1ST0YP>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1035562/download>

undermine our democracy in 2016 but is still doing so with plans of interfering in future U.S. elections.

The FEC is the independent regulatory agency charged with administering and enforcing the federal campaign finance law. In light of the FEC's vote on May 25<sup>th</sup>, I am requesting answers to the following questions:

1. What steps is the FEC currently taking to protect our national elections from foreign influence?
2. Following the 2016 presidential election, has the Commission taken any steps to increase its ability to identify or detect political spending by foreign sources?
3. Are there any recommendations from the FEC on how Congress or the Administration can prevent illegal foreign spending in the 2018 and 2020 elections?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator