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February 15, 2017

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Chairman  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Warner  
Vice Chairman  
Select Committee on Intelligence  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Burr and Vice Chairman Warner:

I write to express my deep concerns about the many lingering questions over the relationship between President Donald Trump and the Russian government, and request the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, in a bipartisan manner, investigate the full range of the allegations that have come to light.

First, the U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Russia played an active role in the 2016 election with the goal of electing Donald Trump as president. While the *New York Times* reports that “phone records and intercepted calls show that members of Donald J. Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign and other Trump associates had repeated contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials in the year before the election,” it is not known whether there was active collusion and cooperation between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. This is something that the American people must learn. Further, we need to know if there is any information available as to what Russian plans may be to disrupt our 2018 elections.

These concerns are serious enough in themselves to warrant an investigation. But there is much more.

Second, multiple media outlets reported last week that U.S. intelligence services have verified portions of a dossier, compiled by a former British intelligence agent, that among other things, alleges that Russian agents hold damaging evidence about President Trump’s past personal and business dealings that could possibly make President Trump susceptible to blackmail.

Third, there have also been reports that the Trump administration's contacts with the Russian government are having both a chilling effect in the intelligence community and jeopardizing longstanding relationships with our allies. How can we go forward in sharing intelligence information with our allies if they are unsure as to the security of this intelligence? Needless to say, all of this could make us less safe and more vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

The resignation of Michael Flynn as National Security Adviser was the right step, given his discussions as a private citizen with the Russian ambassador over U.S. sanctions policy in Russia. As you know, Flynn is only the latest member of the Trump inner circle to resign because of ties to Russian interests. This list also includes former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort and foreign policy adviser Carter Page. The American people need to know the depths of the relationship between the Trump campaign, Trump business interests, and President Trump himself with Russia.

Throughout his campaign, and continuing to today, President Trump has refused to come clean with the American people about the nature and extent of his relationship with Russia. Is that the real reason why he has refused to make public his tax returns? Are there relationships with Russian businesses and financial interests that he does not want to be made public? Are his businesses heavily indebted to Russian banks? The mere possibility that Russia may have leverage over the Trump administration's policymaking makes an investigation urgent and absolutely necessary.

The American people are entitled to have answers to these very serious questions, and to be confident that the President of the United States is putting their interests first. Every day that President Trump and his team dodge these questions, and every time their previous denials are revealed as false, that confidence is further diminished.

Since the president has failed to address these questions, it is incumbent upon the Congress to take seriously its constitutional responsibilities. The American people must have confidence that governmental decisions reflect their interests, not that of a foreign government. A robust investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is critical to restoring that confidence.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders

United States Senator