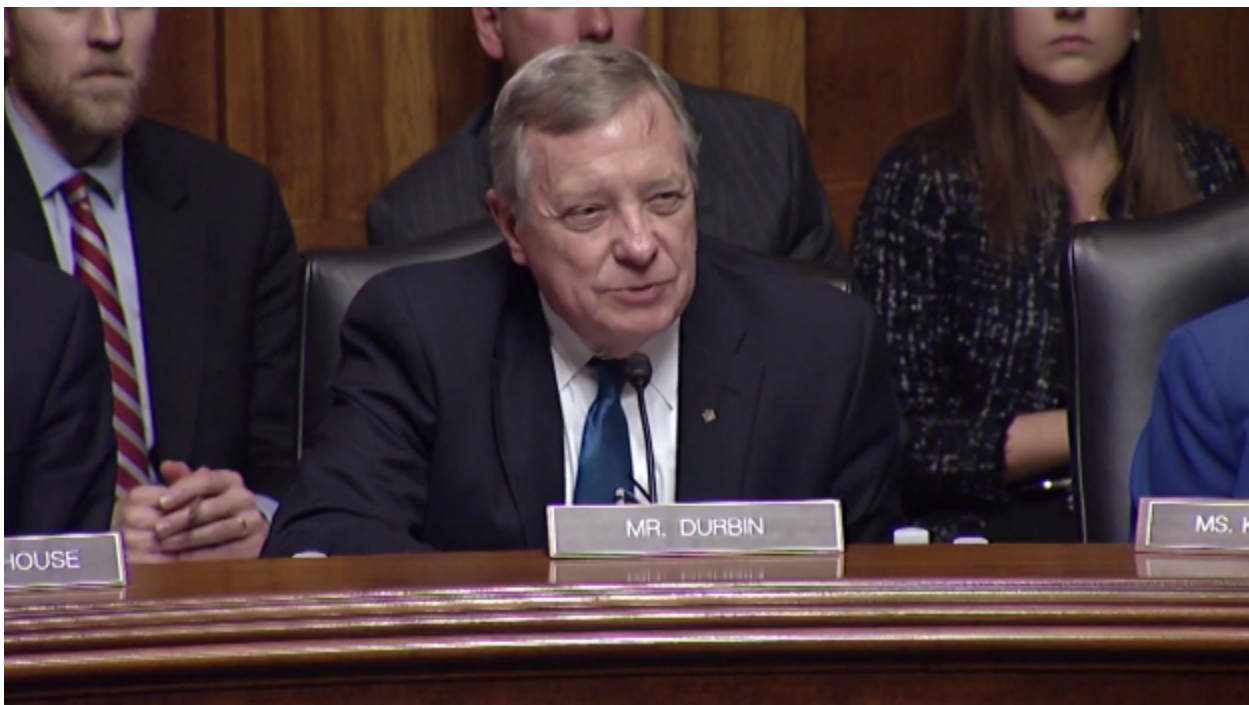


Senate Democrats write letter to President Trump demanding he press Putin on Russia's interference with 2016 election

July 6 2017 11:01 AM



WASHINGTON – Ahead of President Trump’s first individual meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), along with Senate Democratic Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Vice Chair of the U.S. Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence Senator Mark Warner (D-VA), Ex-Officio Member of the U.S. Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), and Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), released a new letter urging President Trump discuss the elephant in

the room – Russia’s interference in the U.S. election in 2016. The Trump administration has indicated that the President has no particular agenda going into this meeting, but Senate Democrats argue that is a huge mistake given the fact that President Putin directed an attack on the most central tenet of our democracy – our election. On top of this, the U.S. Intelligence Community has warned that President Putin is likely to try it again. Senate Democrats therefore urged President Trump to address this head-on in his first individual meeting with Putin, as future interference could put U.S. democracy in jeopardy.

A copy of their letter appears below:

Mr. President:

On Friday, you are scheduled to have your first individual meeting with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. According to your National Security Advisor, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, you are not bringing any specific agenda to this meeting with the Russian President. While your meeting with Putin may have shifted to a more formal setting, it remains critical that you set the agenda from the start and make absolutely clear that Russian interference in our democracy will in no way be tolerated.

As you know, your meeting will be the first meeting of an American President with the Russian leader since the 2016 Presidential election and the first meeting since the Intelligence Community released its assessment of Russian activities and intentions in recent U.S. Elections. The Intelligence Community’s assessment concluded that Russia’s interference in the elections was only “the most recent expression of Moscow’s longstanding desire to undermine the US-led liberal democratic order, but these activities demonstrated a significant escalation in directness, level of activity, and scope of effort compared to previous operations.” Put more simply, President Putin directed an attack on the most central tenet of our democracy – our election. Not raising this matter with President Putin would be a severe dereliction of the duty of the office to which you were elected.

Further, one of the Intelligence Community’s key findings is a harbinger for the future. The assessment stated: “We assess Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the US presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against US allies and their election processes.” The United States has elections this coming fall and additional elections in 2018. No candidate, Democrat, Republican or independent, wants to have President Putin and his cronies manipulating his or her electorate. And, it’s critical that both the Executive and Legislative branches of our government use every tool at our disposal to ensure that Putin does not believe he has a freehand to implement his manipulative program of election interference ever again. The upcoming elections cannot be a playground for President Putin.

It was these findings that led the Senate to draft and pass tough new sanctions against Russia, which we believe will pass the full Congress in short order. We believe it is crucial for you – as the President of the United States – to raise this matter with President Putin and to ensure that he hears you loud and clear – interfering in our elections was wrong in 2016 and it will not be permitted to happen again. We urge you to raise this matter with President Putin later this week. President Putin must understand this can never happen again.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)

Dick Durbin (D-IL)

Mark Warner (D-VA)

Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)

Ben Cardin (D-MD)