

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2018

Mr. Pete Brownell  
President and CEO  
Brownells, Inc.  
200 South Front Street  
Montezuma, IA 50171

Dear Mr. Brownell:

We are writing to request information and documentation you may have in relation to a National Rifle Association delegation's December 2015 trip to Moscow, Russia in which you participated, according to social media postings by the Russian pro-gun organization "Right to Bear Arms,"<sup>1</sup> and related matters.

In February of this year, Senator Wyden launched an investigation after media reports suggested Alexander Torshin, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, had attempted to illegally funnel foreign money into the 2016 campaign through the NRA.<sup>2</sup> On April 6, 2018, the Treasury Department sanctioned Mr. Torshin for his role in the Russian government's worldwide malign activity, including for "attempting to subvert Western democracies, and malicious cyber activities."<sup>3</sup>

Another participant in the December 2015 Moscow trip, Maria Butina, was recently arrested by federal authorities and charged with acting as a covert agent of the Russian government.<sup>4</sup> Prosecutors have alleged that she "engaged in a years-long conspiracy to work covertly in the United States as an undeclared agent of the Russian Federation in order to advance the interest of her home country."<sup>5</sup> In a sworn affidavit for the United States Government, an FBI Special Agent involved in the case attested that Ms. Butina began "laying the groundwork in Russia" for her alleged influence campaign as early as March 24, 2015.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ПРАВО НА ОРУЖИЕ Facebook Profile, December 14, 2015;

[www.facebook.com/PravoNaOruzie/photos/t.100002393251827/989323151139883/](http://www.facebook.com/PravoNaOruzie/photos/t.100002393251827/989323151139883/)

<sup>2</sup> McClatchy, January 18, 2018; <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/article195231139.html>

<sup>3</sup> Treasury Department press release, April 6, 2018; <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0338>

<sup>4</sup> Washington Post, July 16, 2018; [www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/aria-butina-russian-gun-rights-advocate-charged-in-us-with-acting-as-russian-federation-agent/2018/07/16/d1d4832a-8929-11e8-85ae-511bc1146b0b\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/aria-butina-russian-gun-rights-advocate-charged-in-us-with-acting-as-russian-federation-agent/2018/07/16/d1d4832a-8929-11e8-85ae-511bc1146b0b_story.html)

<sup>5</sup> U.S. vs. Mariia Butina, Government's Memorandum in Support of Pretrial Detention, July 18, 2018;

<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4609962/7-18-18-US-Motion-for-Pretrial-Detention-Butina.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Ms. Butina reportedly claimed that her gun rights organization, the Right to Bear Arms, “helped pay part of the expenses of a visiting NRA delegation to my native Russia, something any decent host would do when friends visit.”<sup>7</sup> According to a statement of economic interest that he filed with the Milwaukee County Ethics Board, David A. Clarke Jr, former Milwaukee County Sheriff reported that Ms. Butina’s organization, the Right to Bear Arms, paid \$6,000 for his meals, lodging, and travel for his participation in the trip.<sup>8</sup>

In light of this information, please provide the following no later than August 9, 2018:

- 1) Please confirm your participation in the December 2015 trip and identify how your travel, meals, lodging, and other expenses related to the trip were paid for and provide all supporting documentation, including invitations, itineraries, e-mails, and correspondence.
- 2) Please confirm and describe the extent to which Ms. Butina, her Right to Bear Arms organization, or any other entity associated with her, invited you, organized, or paid in part or in full for any of your expenses related to the December 2015 trip and provide all related documentation, including invitations, itineraries, e-mails, other correspondence, and receipts.
- 3) Please identify and describe any other remuneration you received from Ms. Butina or any entity or organization affiliated with, managed, or controlled by Ms. Butina and provide all related documentation, including e-mails, other correspondence, and receipts.
- 4) What role, if any, did the National Rifle Association or any of the organization’s senior leadership play in assisting or approving the trip to Russia or your participation in any of the events in which your delegation took part?
- 5) Please identify and describe any interactions you had with Mr. Torshin or Ms. Butina on the December 2015 trip in question, and provide all related documentation, including e-mails and other correspondence.
- 6) Please identify and describe any interactions you had with Mr. Torshin or Ms. Butina at any other point in time dating back to 2010—in the United States or elsewhere—and provide all related documentation, including e-mails and other correspondence.
- 7) Please identify and describe any interactions, financial or otherwise, you have had with Paul Erickson or any entity connected to him, including but not limited to Bridges LLC and provide all related documentation, including e-mails, other correspondence, and receipts.
- 8) On March 17, 2014, the United States authorized sanctions against multiple individuals, including then-Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Rogozin for his role in the Russian government’s annexation of Crimea.<sup>9</sup> Public reporting indicates that he participated in meetings with your delegation during the Moscow trip.<sup>10</sup> Please identify and describe any interactions you had with Mr. Rogozin or any other related individual or entity who were sanctioned

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<sup>7</sup> ThinkProgress, July 18, 2018; <https://thinkprogress.org/heres-what-accused-russian-spy-maria-butina-told-thinkprogress-in-2016-75cd890b1e2e/>

<sup>8</sup> Milwaukee County Ethics Board, Statement of Economic Interest filed January 31, 2016; <http://county.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cntySheriff/documents/2016/2015SEI.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> *Business Insider*, March 17, 2014; <http://www.businessinsider.com/crimea-vote-referendum-sanctions-obama-putin-2014-3>

<sup>10</sup> McClatchy, June 11, 2018; <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/latest-news/article212756749.html>

at the time and provide all related documentation, including e-mails and other correspondence.

Please contact Senator Wyden's office at 202-224-<sup>5244</sup>~~5344~~ to make arrangements for production of these materials or to answer any further questions. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

  
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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

  
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

  
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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator