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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

JEFFREY WRASE, STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF ECONOMIST
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July 23, 2018

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

Earlier this year Senator Wyden wrote to you requesting any documents in the possession of the Department of Treasury associated with the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Russia. Senator Wyden specifically requested documents related to Russian national and Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation Alexander Torshin and the role he may have played in illegally funneling foreign money into the 2016 campaign.¹ To this date, his office has not received so much as an acknowledgment of the request, let alone a sufficient response. Therefore we are writing again to renew and expand upon this request and would remind you that during your confirmation process, you committed to Chairman Hatch that you would provide a prompt response in writing to any questions addressed to you by any Senator of the Senate Finance Committee.²

In the time since Senator Wyden's initial request, your department has sanctioned Mr. Torshin for his role in the Russian government's worldwide malign activity, "including continuing to occupy Crimea and instigate violence in eastern Ukraine, supplying the Assad regime with material and weaponry as they bomb their own civilians, attempting to subvert Western democracies, and malicious cyber activities."³

Just this week Mr. Torshin's one-time Central Bank assistant and gun-rights advocate Maria Butina was arrested by federal authorities and charged with acting as a covert agent of the Russian government.⁴ According to a criminal complaint filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, "While serving as Special Assistant to an official of the Russian Federation, BUTINA would meet in person and communicate via electronic means with that official for the purpose of developing and executing a plan to identify and exploit personal connections with U.S. Persons having influence in American politics who were in positions to

¹ <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/020218%20Mnuchin%20NRA%20Letter.pdf>

² Senate Finance Committee Hearing, January 19, 2017; <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/29928.pdf>

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

⁴ 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

advance the interests of the Russian Federation.”⁵ 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,” and have identified at least one suspicious wire transfer to a Russian bank account.⁶

The unnamed Russian Federation official cited in the complaint clearly matches the description of Mr. Torshin. The complaint also described U.S. organizations and individuals with whom Ms. Butina communicated and sought to conspire.

In light of these developments we are requesting the following:

- 1) Compliance with Senator Wyden’s initial request for “any documents relevant to financial links between the NRA and its associated entities and Mr. Torshin or other Russian officials, and that you include any documents related to shell companies or other illicit funding mechanisms suspected of being connected to these reported links.”
- 2) Production of any documents relevant to financial links between the NRA, its associated entities and Ms. Butina and any entities or individuals related to her. This request includes but is not limited to her Russian gun group “Right to Bear Arms,” political operative Paul Erickson, and the corporation Butina and Erickson registered together in South Dakota, “Bridges, LLC.”⁷

We ask that the Department please contact our Committee staff at (202) 224-4515 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
Ranking Member



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator

⁵ U.S. vs. Mariia Butina, Criminal Complaint, July 14, 2018; <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1080761/download>

⁶ 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>

⁷ The Argus Leader, July 17, 2018; www.argusleader.com/story/news/crime/2018/07/17/russian-charged-conspiracy-maria-butina-south-dakota-russia/791603002/