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“The Lead Opponent”: Republican Leader Mitch McConnell Spent Decades Fighting Against The Integrity Of Our Elections. Now, He’s Blocking Bipartisan Efforts to Secure Our Elections from Foreign Interference.

Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) has led a decades-long effort to strike down any meaningful reforms to ensure fair elections. For years, Sen. McConnell has fought to increase the impact of dark money and corporate spending in our elections. But now, after [reportedly fighting efforts](#) to expose Putin’s interference during the 2016 elections, Senator McConnell is blocking bipartisan reforms that would secure our elections from foreign interference.

It has been almost 1,000 days since the U.S. intelligence community concluded that Russia interfered in our elections – but instead of working with Democrats to improve the integrity of our democracy, Senator McConnell is blocking commonsense election security measures.

McConnell Led The Corporate And Special-Interest Dark Money Takeover Of Our Elections, Starting With A War Against Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform

1999: McConnell Downplayed the Potential Corrupting Impact of Money in Politics. In a floor debate with Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Sen. McConnell downplayed the potential corrupting impact of corporate money in politics. [Congressional Record, [10/14/99](#)]

2001: McConnell Railed Against Campaign Finance Reform, Says “One Result of McCain-Feingold is Certain: America Loses.” In a New York Times op-ed titled In Defense of Soft Money, McConnell attacked McCain-Feingold’s prohibition on unlimited and unregulated donations to political party-building used to boost candidates for office. [NYT, [1/1/01](#)]

- McCain-Feingold, also known as the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, regulated financing for federal political candidates and campaigns, prohibiting national political parties, federal candidates, and officeholders from soliciting soft money contributions in federal elections.

2002: McConnell Sued The Federal Elections Commission In An Attempt To Overturn Will Of Congress And Invalidate McCain-Feingold. Before the McCain-Feingold bill was signed into law, Sen. McConnell announced his intent to sue to stop it from taking effect. Asked why it was so important to him that he be the lead plaintiff against the campaign finance reform law, McConnell said “I think that that’s the logical role for me to play as the lead opponent of it over the last decade.” [NPR All Things Considered via Lexis, 3/20/02]

2003: Supreme Court Ruled Against McConnell, Upheld Major Provisions of McCain-Feingold. In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court upheld major provisions of the bipartisan campaign finance law. The decision was later largely overturned in 2010 by a Supreme Court altered by the confirmation of Justices Roberts and Alito. [NYT, [12/11/03](#)]

2006: Republicans Confirm Judge Samuel Alito to Fill Supreme Court Vacancy Following Retirement of Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. Justice Alito cast key votes in cases that fundamentally transformed our campaign finance system. Unlike the manner in which he would later handle the nomination of Chief Judge Merrick Garland, Sen. McConnell guaranteed Judge Alito “a respectful hearing and at the end of that, a process of up-or-down vote, as has always been the case on Supreme Court nominees throughout the history of the Senate.” President Bush credited Sen. McConnell for the confirmation of Justice Roberts and Justice Alito, saying there was “no stronger advocate” than Sen. McConnell. Of the newly composed Court following the confirmation of Justice Alito, Justice O’Connor reportedly said, “Everything I stood for is

being undone.” [News Conference, 10/31/05; Remarks by the President, [3/2/07](#); Thomas, Evan. First: Sandra Day O’Connor. New York: Random House, 2019. Print.]

2007: McConnell Blocked Four FEC Nominations Because Senate Democrats Would Not Support A Nominee With A Record Of Politicizing DOJ’s Civil Rights Division And Intense Voter Suppression, Hans von Spakovsky.

- Before his nomination to the FEC, von Spakovsky served at DOJ where he took over most of the responsibilities and duties of the nonpartisan chief of the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division. According to career attorneys, von Spakovsky “played a major role in the implementation of practices which injected political factors into decision-making on enforcement matters and into the hiring process, and included repeated efforts to intimidate career staff.” [The Hill, [6/14/07](#); Brennan Center, [2017](#)]
- When career DOJ prosecutors recommended the Department reject a Georgia law because it would disenfranchise thousands of black voters, von Spakovsky urged the approval of the state’s law. A federal judge eventually struck down the law. [Brennan Center, [9/25/07](#)]

2008: McConnell Rejected Democratic Offer To Break FEC Deadlock Because It Would Not Include A Confirmation of von Spakovsky. Then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid wrote a letter to the Bush White House proposing that Democrats and Republicans would each choose two new FEC nominees, as long as von Spakovsky was taken out of consideration. Without von Spakovsky, however, McConnell, refused the offer. The deadlock eventually ended when von Spakovsky withdrew from consideration. [Politico, [4/29/08](#); Politico, [5/16/08](#)]

2010: McConnell Welcomed the Citizens United v. FEC Supreme Court Decision That Gutted McCain-Feingold And Has Allowed Dark Money To Pour Into Our Elections. According to McConnell, “With [Citizens United], the Supreme Court took an important step in the direction of restoring First Amendment rights of these groups by ruling that the Constitution protects their right to express themselves about political candidates and issues up until Election Day.” [Politico, [1/21/10](#)]

- In Citizens United, the Court found that corporations had the same rights as individuals to engage in political speech and could therefore spend as much as they wanted for or against political candidates. It also allowed certain nonprofit organizations to prevent the disclosure of their donors and spend on issue ads. [Politifact, [7/28/10](#), [8/31/18](#)]
- The Citizens United decision unleashed a surge of dark money that has corroded our democracy. Since then, power has shifted increasingly towards outside spending groups such as super PACs and dark money political nonprofits, releasing unprecedented amounts of money towards political advertisements meant to influence voters. [Center for Responsive Politics, [1/21/19](#)]

2012: McConnell Submitted An Amicus Brief In Support Of Overturning State Laws That Regulate Campaign Finance Reform. In American Tradition Partnership v. Bullock, McConnell submitted a [legal brief](#) to the Supreme Court in support of overturning the state’s law that barred corporate expenditures in political campaigns. The Court found the Montana law inconsistent with Citizens United. [NYT, [5/3/12](#)]

2013: McConnell Filed An Amicus Brief Arguing That BCRA’s Limits To Political Spending Are “Invalid Under The First Amendment.” In April 2014, the Supreme Court issued a 5-4 ruling in McCutcheon v. FEC that struck down the aggregate limits on the amount an individual can contribute during a two-year period to all federal candidates, parties, and political action committees combined. [FEC, [5/14](#)]

Sen. McConnell Continues To Block Every Effort To Protect Our Elections From Corruption And Dark Money

During his fight against McCain-Feingold, Sen. McConnell said that “full disclosure” is “the way to prevent corruption,” and that “Limits on donations to candidates and full disclosure are the way you have a clean system.” [NPR Talk of the Nation via Lexis, 11/18/03]

Unfortunately, as Republican Leader, Senator McConnell has lead the fight to empower wealthy, shadowy campaign donors.

2010 and 2012: Under the Leadership of Minority Leader McConnell, Senate Republicans Voted Unanimously to Block the DISCLOSE Act. The DISCLOSE Act would have subjected corporations and interest groups to stricter financial disclosure requirements. This legislation was written largely on the basis in which the Supreme Court ruled 8 to 1 in favor of the government’s ability to enforce disclosure requirements for organizations that participate in the political process. Despite his previous support for campaign finance disclosures, Sen. McConnell led Republican efforts to filibuster the DISCLOSE Act. [Washington Post, [7/28/10](#), CNN, [7/17/12](#)]

2019: McConnell Now Refuses To Bring Up For The People Act For A Vote, Blocking Democratic Efforts To Reform Our Campaign Finance System, Strengthen Government Ethics, And Expand Voting Rights. Senator McConnell has refused to allow debate on House-passed government transparency and anti-corruption legislation simply “because I get to decide what we vote on.” [Politico, [3/6/19](#)]

After Years Of Fighting Against Measures To Ensure The Integrity Of Our Elections, McConnell Has Gone Even Further, Blocking Efforts To Secure Our Elections From Foreign Interference

It Has Been Almost 1,000 Days Since The U.S. Intelligence Community Concluded That Putin Interfered In Our Elections. According to public reports, during the 2016 elections Senator McConnell [refused to publicly acknowledge](#) the extent of Putin’s interference in our elections and threatened that he “would consider any effort by the White House to challenge the Russians publicly an act of partisan politics.” And it has been almost 100 days since Special Counsel Mueller provided an authoritative report entailing how Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election “in sweeping and systematic fashion.” After the 2018 midterms, key members of the Trump Administration publicly

recognized the ongoing threats of foreign interference. But unfortunately, McConnell continues to block efforts to bolster the security of our elections.

Republican Committee Chairman and Member of McConnell's Leadership Team: McConnell Blocking Election Security Legislation to Avoid Debate on Election Integrity Reforms. Asked by Senator Durbin (D-IL) why the Senate Rules Committee is not marking up any election security legislation this congress, Chairman Roy Blunt (R-MO) pointed the finger squarely at the Republican Leader, saying Sen. McConnell hopes to avoid a debate on H.R.1, the For the People Act. [Senate Rules Committee Hearing, [5/15/19](#); McClatchy, [4/10/19](#)]

Republicans Block Election Security Legislation: Despite The Crucial Need To Secure Our Elections, McConnell Has Refused To Bring Any Meaningful Election Security Funding Or Reforms Up For A Vote. Under his leadership, Republicans continue to block meaningful proposals:

- Senate Republicans blocked Senator Klobuchar (D-MN) from bringing up S. 1540, the Election Security Act, which would provide \$1 billion in election security grants to states for cybersecurity improvements and audits and require the president to issue a new national security strategy to protect our institutions. [The Hill, [6/25/19](#)]

- Senate Republicans blocked Senator Blumenthal (D-CT) from bringing up S. 1247, the Duty to Report Act, which would require campaigns to report offers of illegal foreign assistance to the FBI. [Congressional Record, [6/25/19](#)]
- Senate Republicans blocked Senator Warner (D-VA) from bringing up S. 1562, the Foreign Influence Reporting in Elections (FIRE) Act, which would require any presidential campaign that receives offers of assistance from an agent of a foreign government to notify the FBI about it. [The Hill, [6/13/19](#)]
- Senate Republicans blocked a Democratic push that would have provided \$250 million to beef up election security by, among other things, replacing outdated voting equipment. [USA Today, [8/1/18](#)]

It is time for Mitch McConnell to stand up for the beliefs he once professed and put country before party by ending his legislative graveyard. Without change, McConnell is threatening the integrity of, and faith in, our democratic institutions.