

Floor Speech by Senator Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

I rise today to express my strong opposition to President Trump's nomination of Rex Tillerson to be the next Secretary of State. There are many, many reasons to oppose this nomination, but the main reason is as simple as it is disturbing – Tillerson's extensive and longstanding ties with Russia mean that the United States of America simply cannot trust him to be a strong advocate for the interests of our country.

Here's what's been publicly reported: our intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian government conducted a successful series of cyber-attacks on the United States designed to help Donald Trump get elected President. Intelligence chiefs have briefed the President on a dossier alleging that the Russian government has collected compromising information on him. In response, the President has attacked the intelligence community – and this week, he installed his political crony, Steve Bannon, a man with ties to white nationalists, on the National Security Council while marginalizing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of National Intelligence.

There is significant reason to believe that the President has extensive financial relationships with Russia, but nobody actually knows any of the details because he has refused to release his tax returns. And apparently the President's own National Security Advisor is currently under FBI investigation for his own interactions with the Russian government.

Mr./Madam President, this is only twelfth day of the Trump Presidency, and this is what's going on right now. Twelve days! I wish this weren't happening. I wish things were normal. But this – is – not – normal. And we cannot simply ignore all of it as we evaluate the President's nominees to critical foreign policy and national security jobs.

I've heard some people say that Rex Tillerson doesn't know anything about diplomacy or have any experience with foreign policy. But that's not true. For the last decade, Tillerson served as the CEO of Exxon Mobil – a massive company that would have roughly the 42nd largest economy in the world if it were its own country. As the leader of that giant oil company, Tillerson was an expert at diplomacy – specifically, how to advance the interests of his own fabulously wealthy oil company and himself, no matter the consequences for American foreign policy toward Russia.

Russia has vast oil resources, and Exxon is the one of the world's largest oil companies. Getting at that oil is a critical priority for Exxon. Such a high priority, in fact, that when it came time to pick a new CEO, Exxon chose Tillerson, who spent years managing the company's major Russia efforts. This isn't just a passing coincidence. Tillerson has worked closely with Putin's senior lieutenants, and, in 2013, received the highest honor the Kremlin gives to foreigners. Tillerson's Russia projects ran into trouble the following year, though – because after Russia invaded

Ukraine and started illegally annexing territory, Europe and the United States slapped sanctions on Russia.

Those sanctions made business more difficult for Exxon. So Tillerson ignored them. He forged ahead despite the sanctions, signing more agreements with Russia, then used his company's army of well-funded lobbyists to undermine our sanctions on Russia. When confronted with that fact in his confirmation hearing, Tillerson first pretended that he didn't know if the company had lobbied at all, then later said the company simply participated in discussions with lawmakers, without actually taking a position. He's saying they paid their lobbyists to show up and just talk generally—not to advance what the company wanted? When you hear something that lame, you wonder how dumb he thinks we are.

Mr. Tillerson has argued that in his job at Exxon, he was advocating for the interests of his giant oil company, and he understands that being Secretary of State is a different job. Really? At his hearing, Tillerson lamented how when sanctions are imposed, “by their design, [they] are going to harm American businesses” – as though the principal question the Secretary of State should be asking when deciding whether to hold Russia accountable for hacking our elections or annexing Crimea is whether it might dent the bottom line of a giant oil company.

And has Tillerson really separated himself from Exxon? Tillerson is receiving a massive, \$180 million golden parachute for becoming Secretary of State. \$180 million. It's a special payout that he wouldn't get if he were taking another job – he's only getting it because he's coming to work for the government. I have opposed these parachutes for years. Many of us have worked on legislation to make them criminally illegal. I've opposed nominees in my own party over them. Because if your employer offers you \$180 million to go work for the government, that looks like an awful lot like a bribe for future services. This kind of payment raises the question of whether you work for the government, for the multi-national oil company, or for both. America deserves a Secretary of State who works for the American people. Period.

Will Tillerson help Exxon while in office? The law requires him to recuse himself from any matters involving this company for just one year. Common sense requires Tillerson – who, again, is receiving a \$180 million special payment from the company where he has worked his entire adult life – to recuse himself from all matters involving Exxon for the entirety of his time in government. But when pressed by my Massachusetts colleague, Sen. Markey, Tillerson flatly refused to do it.

Mr. Tillerson's views, experiences, relationships, and compromising arrangements with Russia aren't my only problem with this nomination – not by a long shot.

Mr. Tillerson's company has spent years lying about climate change. In Massachusetts, we have laws about consumer fraud—telling people lies about your product, lies that could make a difference about whether customers want to buy it. The Massachusetts attorney general, Maura Healy, has been investigating whether Exxon deliberately misled people about the impact of climate change on our economy, our environment, our health and our future. Exxon didn't want to answer, so they have bullied and stonewalled all the way. But it hasn't worked. Our Attorney General won a court ruling earlier this month, and Exxon is being forced to hand over 40 years'

worth of internal documents that will show what the company knew about climate change, when they knew it and whether they lied to customers, investors and the general public.

Tillerson bobbed and weaved on climate change at his confirmation hearing. Maybe he's just trying to avoid accidentally saying anything that might help Massachusetts finally hold his company accountable for massive fraud. That may be OK for a CEO, but that's not good enough for someone who wants to be our nation's Secretary of State. Climate change is a defining issue of our time, and the last thing we should do is hand our foreign policy over to someone who cares more about lining his own pockets than the survival of our planet.

I could go on at length about the glaring problems with Mr. Tillerson's nomination. It is amazing how far we have fallen – to go from John Kerry – an accomplished statesman, combat veteran, Presidential candidate, long-time public servant, and son of Massachusetts – to a billionaire with a golden parachute and no record of public service or putting American foreign policy interests ahead of his corporate interests.

When we vote, Senators should understand this: handing American foreign policy over to the leader of a giant oil company is not something we do in the United States. It's something Vladimir Putin would do in Russia. Donald Trump is building his presidency in the image of Vladimir Putin. That's good for Russia, but a real problem for America.

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