

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 31, 2020

John Ratcliffe
Director of National Intelligence
Office of the Director of National Intelligence
1500 Tysons McLean Dr,
McLean, VA 22102

Director Ratcliffe:

We write to express serious alarm regarding your decision to stop providing in-person election security briefings to Congress, and to insist that you immediately reschedule these critical briefings ahead of the November general election.

There are 63 days remaining until the election, and your office has confirmed that Russia and other foreign adversaries are actively working to undermine our democracy. As a former Member of Congress, you understand that in order to effectively do our jobs, Congress must receive comprehensive intelligence briefings on critical issues like the security of our elections. In addition to being necessary, these briefings are required by law.

The *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004* established the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). The law requires that the Director of National Intelligence “fully and currently inform” Congress. Under the *National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2020*, there are also statutory requirements to brief Congress. On August 7, following election security briefings to members of Congress, the ODNI affirmed in a statement that “there will continue to be demand for more information as the election approaches. The IC [Intelligence Community] has and will continue to provide classified election threat briefings to the presidential campaigns, political committees and all Members of Congress.”¹

The IC acknowledges the importance of these briefings in its own words. Your mission statement explains that the IC “...deliver[s] foreign intelligence and counterintelligence information to America's leaders” including policymakers outside the executive branch. As you know, Congress does not simply provide oversight; these critical intelligence briefings provide important information to inform our policymaking process, as your own mission statement recognizes.

¹ *Statement by NCSC Director William Evanina: Election Threat Update for the American Public*, Press Release, Office of the Director of National Intelligence (August 7, 2020) <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/item/2139-statement-by-ncsc-director-william-ewanina-election-threat-update-for-the-american-public>

On August 7, ODNI issued a public statement providing an unclassified overview of foreign threats to the 2020 election, including efforts to influence voters, shift U.S. policies, increase public discord, and undermine confidence in our democratic process. The ODNI specifically warned that foreign adversaries like Russia “may also seek to compromise election infrastructure by interfering with the voting process, stealing sensitive data, or calling into question the validity of the election results.”² Information about these serious threats to our elections must be provided to those elected to represent the American people.

However, on August 28, 2020, you sent a letter notifying Congress that in-person briefings would stop and that “the ODNI will primarily meet its obligation to keep Congress fully and currently informed leading into the Presidential election through written finished intelligence products.”³ The important dialogue that comes from a briefing cannot be understated, as you’re well aware. This is why the IC has for decades arranged for senior members of every administration to have intelligence briefers who provide regular, often daily, briefings, rather than simply sending written products to review. Intelligence memos are not a substitute for full congressional briefings. It is also unacceptable to fully brief only one Committee on matters related to federal elections.

As Members of the House and Senate with jurisdiction over federal elections, we call on you to immediately resume in-person briefings. We also remind you that the ODNI does not own the intelligence it collects on behalf of the American people, it is a custodian of the information. In addition to the power to establish and fund the ODNI, Congress has the power to compel information from it.

As our nation faces grave threats to our election system from determined adversaries, we must work together to protect our democracy. We are thankful to the brave men and women of the Intelligence Community who do their work without fear or favor to protect our country. We look forward to seeing them in the near future for election security briefings.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



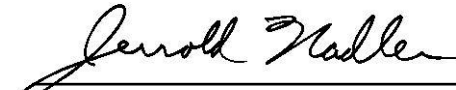
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

² Ibid.

³ Director of National Intelligence Ratcliffe, *Letter to Senator Rubio, Senator Warner, Representative Schiff, Representative Nunes, Representative Visclosky, Representative Calvert, Senator Shelby, Senator Durbin, Senator McConnell, Senator Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Representative McCarthy*, Office of the Director of National Intelligence (August 28, 2020)



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress