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Schiff Statement on House Republicans' Premature Shutdown of Russia Investigation

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Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), the Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, released the following statement:

“Today, the House Majority has announced it is terminating the Russia investigation, leaving to others the important work of determining the full extent of Russian interference in our election, the role of U.S. persons connected to the Trump campaign in that intervention, possible efforts to obstruct the investigation by the President and most important, what needs to be done to protect the country going forward. While the Majority members of our committee have indicated for some time that they have been under great pressure to end the investigation, it is nonetheless another tragic milestone for this Congress, and represents yet another capitulation to the executive branch. By ending its oversight role in the only authorized investigation in the House, the Majority has placed the interests of protecting the President over protecting the country, and history will judge its actions harshly.

“Next week, it will be one year since our investigation began with its first open hearing, and the country learned that the Trump campaign had been the subject of a counterintelligence investigation since July of the election year. Since that time, we have learned a great deal about countless secret meetings, conversations and communications between Trump campaign officials and the Russians, all of which the Trump Administration initially denied, would later misrepresent, and finally be forced to acknowledge. Thirteen Russians have been indicted in a far reaching conspiracy in which the Russians sought to influence our election by helping Donald Trump, hurting the Hillary Clinton campaign and sowing discord in the United States. Most significant, high-ranking Trump campaign and Administration officials have also been indicted, including the President’s national security advisor, his campaign chair and deputy campaign chair, as well as one of his foreign policy advisors, and three of those have already pled guilty.

“During that first open hearing of our investigation, I asked whether we could conduct this investigation in the kind of thorough and nonpartisan manner that the seriousness of the issues merited, or whether the enormous political consequences of our work would make that impossible. At that time, I said that I did not know the answer, but ‘if this committee can do its work properly, if we can pursue the facts wherever they lead, unafraid to compel witnesses to testify, to hear what they have to say, to learn what we will and, after

exhaustive work, reach a common conclusion, it would be a tremendous public service and one that is very much in the national interest.’

“Regrettably, that challenge proved too much. The Majority was not willing to pursue the facts wherever they would lead, would prove afraid to compel witnesses like Steve Bannon, Hope Hicks, Jeff Sessions, Donald Trump Jr., Corey Lewandowski and so many others to answer questions relevant to our investigation. It proved unwilling to subpoena documents like phone records, text messages, bank records and other key records so that we might determine the truth about the most significant attack on our democratic institutions in history. Instead, it began a series of counter-investigations, designed to attack the credibility of the FBI, the Departments of Justice and State, and investigate anyone and anything other than what they were charged to do — investigate Russia’s interference in our election and the role the Trump campaign played. Ironically, even while they close down the Russia investigation, they plan to continue trying to put our own government on trial: this is a great service to the President, and a profound disservice to the country.

“Some will say that we should leave the investigation to Special Counsel Mueller anyway, since he has the resources and independence to do the job. But this fundamentally misapprehends the mission of the Special Counsel, which is to determine whether U.S. laws were broken and who should be prosecuted. It is not Mueller’s job to tell the American people what happened, that is our job, and the Majority has walked away from it. Others may be tempted to say a pox on both houses, and suggest that in a dispute between the parties, both must be equally culpable. But after months of urging the Majority to do a credible investigation, the Minority was put in the position of going along with a fundamentally unserious investigative process, or pointing out what should be done, what must be done, to learn the truth. We chose the latter course.

“On a fundamental aspect of our investigation — substantiating the conclusions of the Intelligence Community’s assessment that the Russians interfered in our democracy to advance the Trump campaign, hurt Clinton and sow discord — we should have been able to issue a common report. On those issues, the evidence is clear and overwhelming that the Intelligence Community Assessment was correct. On a whole host of investigative threads, our work is fundamentally incomplete, some issues partially investigated, others, like that involving credible allegations of Russian money laundering, remain barely touched. If the Russians do have leverage over the President of the United States, the Majority has simply decided it would rather not know. On the final aspect of our work — setting out the prescriptions for protecting the country going forward — we will endeavor to continue our work, with or without the active participation of the Majority.

“In the coming weeks and months, new information will continue to be exposed through enterprising journalism, indictments by the Special Counsel, or continued investigative work by Committee Democrats and our counterparts in the Senate. And each time this new information becomes public, Republicans will be held accountable for abandoning a critical investigation of such vital national importance.”

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