

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 16, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply disturbed to read Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes's public admission to *The New York Times* that he spearheaded the charge to mislead elected lawmakers and the American people about the Iran nuclear deal and the negotiations that led to this agreement.

In "The Aspiring Novelist Who Became Obama's Foreign-Policy Guru" (May 5, 2016), reporter David Samuels of *The New York Times* wrote how Mr. Rhodes created an "echo chamber" of sympathetic reporters and think-tanks to spread the misconception that the rise of so-called moderates in the Iranian regime led to talks for a nuclear deal when, in fact, "the most meaningful part of the negotiations with Iran had begun in mid-2012, many months before Rouhani and the 'moderate' camp were chosen in an election among candidates handpicked by Iran's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei." In addition, Mr. Rhodes showed alarming contempt for members of the news media whom he apparently sought to manipulate in his "echo chamber." "The average reporter we talk to is 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around political campaigns," Mr. Rhodes said, adding for good measure: "They literally know nothing."

What steps will your Administration take to restore the trust of the American public and members of the news media after Mr. Rhodes's admitted that he purposefully "created an echo chamber" during the debate over the Iran nuclear deal with the objective of propagating misconceptions and "saying things that validated what we [the Administration] had given them to say"?

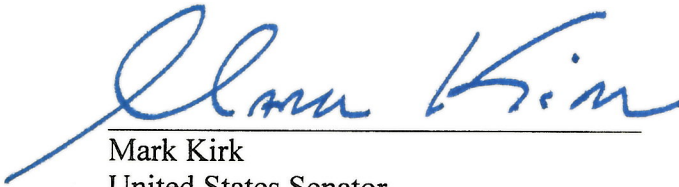
Moreover, Mr. Rhodes repeatedly displayed an astonishing level of disrespect towards the U.S. Congress as he described his role in the important debate over the Iran nuclear deal's merits last year. He insultingly asserted that it was "impossible" for lawmakers elected by the American people to engage in "a sober, reasoned public debate, after which members of Congress reflect and take a vote." On the Administration's subsequent decision to engage in a strategy to mislead the American people, he said: "In the absence of rational discourse, we are going to discourse the [expletive] out of this."

Do you agree with Mr. Rhodes's contention that it is "impossible" for elected U.S. lawmakers to engage in a "sober, reasoned public debate" with your Administration over Iran or other issues

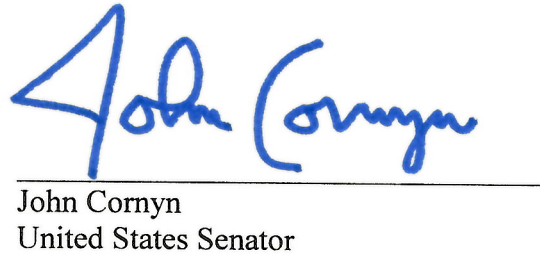
vital to America's security and prosperity? What steps will your Administration itself take to engage in rational discourse and repair damaged relations with the Congress?

We call on you to dismiss Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes before he further tarnishes the Office of President. While members of the Executive and Legislative branches may sometimes deeply disagree on issues of vital importance to our nation's security and prosperity, we should all agree, for the greater good of our Republic and the citizens whom we represent, to engage in our debates in a respectful, honest, and constructive manner. Mr. Rhodes's disrespectful, deceptive, and destructive conduct has fallen appallingly short of this standard, however. Indeed, if he had conducted himself this way in a typical place of business outside Washington, where American taxpayers work, he surely would have been already fired or asked to resign.

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator