**Trump Presidency Going Wild**

by Martin Hittelman

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[Donald Trump is being charged with Abuse of Power and Obstruction of Congress. ARTICLE I: Abuse of Power The Constitution provides that the House of Representatives 'shall have the sole Power of Impeachment' and that the President 'shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. In his conduct of the office of President of the United States—and in violation of his constitutional oath faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed—Donald J. Trump has abused the powers of the Presidency, in that: Using the powers of his high office, President Trump solicited the interference of a foreign government, Ukraine, in the 2020 United States Presidential election. He did so through a scheme or course of conduct that included soliciting the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations that would benefit his reelection, harm the election prospects of a political opponent, and influence the 2020 United States Presidential election to his advantage. President Trump also sought to pressure the Government of Ukraine to take these steps by conditioning official United States Government acts of significant value to Ukraine on its public announcement of the investigations. President Trump engaged in this scheme or course of conduct for corrupt purposes in pursuit of personal political benefit. In so doing, President Trump used the powers of the Presidency in a manner that compromised the national security of the United States and undermined the integrity of the United States democratic process. He thus ignored and injured the interests of the Nation. President Trump engaged in this scheme or course of conduct through the following means: (1) President Trump—acting both directly and through his agents Within and Outside the United States Government corruptly solicited the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations into— (A) a political opponent, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden,; and (B) a discredited theory promoted by Russia alleging that Ukraine—rather than Russia—interfered in the 2016 United States Presidential election. (2) With the same corrupt motives, President Trump—acting both directly and through his agents within and outside the United States Government—conditioned two official acts on the public announcements that he had requested— (A) the release of $391 million of United States taxpayer funds that Congress had appropriated on a bipartisan basis for the purpose of providing vital military and security assistance to Ukraine to oppose Russian aggression and which President Trump had ordered suspended; and (B) a head of state meeting at the White House, which the President of Ukraine sought to demonstrate continued United States support for the Government of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. (3) Faced with the public revelation of his actions, President Trump ultimately released the military and security assistance to the Government of Ukraine, but has persisted in openly and corruptly urging and soliciting Ukraine to undertake investigations for his personal political benefit. These actions were consistent with President Trump's previous invitations of foreign interference in United States elections. In all of this, President Trump abused the powers of the Presidency by ignoring and injuring national security and other vital national interests to obtain an improper personal political benefit. He has also betrayed the Nation by abusing his high office to enlist a foreign power in corrupting democratic elections. Wherefore President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain a threat to national security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office, and has acted in a manner grossly incompatible with self-governance and the rule of law. President Trump thus warrants impeachment and trial, removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States. ARTICLE II: Obstruction of Congress The Constitution provides that the House of Representatives 'shall have the sole Power of Impeachment' and that the President 'shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. In his conduct of the office of President of the United States and in violation of his constitutional oath faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed—Donald J. Trump has directed the unprecedented, categorical, and indiscriminate defiance of subpoenas issued by the House of Representatives pursuant to its 'sole Power of Impeachment'. President Trump has abused the powers of the Presidency in a manner offensive to, and subversive of, the Constitution, in that: The House of Representatives has engaged in an impeachment inquiry focused on President Trump's corrupt solicitation of the Government of Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 United States Presidential election. As part of this impeachment inquiry, the Committees undertaking the investigation served subpoenas seeking documents and testimony deemed vital to the inquiry from various Executive Branch agencies and offices, and current and former officials.: In response, without lawful cause or excuse, President Trump directed Executive Branch agencies, offices, and officials not to comply with those subpoenas. President Trump thus interposed the powers of the Presidency against the lawful subpoenas of the House of Representatives, and assumed to himself functions and judgments necessary to the exercise of the 'sole Power of Impeachment' vested by the Constitution in the House of Representatives.: President Trump abused the powers of his high office through the following means: (1) Directing the White House to defy a lawful subpoena by withholding the production of documents sought therein by the Committees.: (2) Directing other Executive Branch agencies and offices to defy lawful subpoenas and withhold the production of documents and records from the Committees—in response to which the Department of State, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Energy, and Department of Defense refused to produce a single document or record.: (3) Directing current and former Executive Branch officials not to cooperate with the Committees—in response to which nine Administration officials defied subpoenas for testimony, namely John Michael 'Mick' Mulvaney, Robert B. Blair, John A. Eisenberg, Michael Ellis, Preston Wells Griffith, Russell T. Vought, Michael Duffey, Brian McCormack, and T. Ulrich Brechbuhl.: These actions were consistent with President Trump's previous efforts to undermine United States Government investigations into foreign interference in United States elections.: Through these actions, President Trump sought to arrogate to himself the right to determine the propriety, scope, and nature of an impeachment inquiry into his own conduct, as well as the unilateral prerogative to deny any and all information to the House of Representatives in the exercise of its 'sole Power of Impeachment'. In the history of the Republic, no President has ever ordered the complete defiance of an impeachment inquiry or sought to obstruct and impede so comprehensively the ability of the House of Representatives to investigate 'high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. This abuse of office served to cover up the President's own repeated misconduct and to seize and control the power of impeachment—and thus to nullify a vital constitutional safeguard vested solely in the House of Representatives.: In all of this, President Trump has acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President and subversive of constitutional government, to the great prejudice of the cause of law and justice, and to the manifest injury of the people of the United States.: Wherefore, President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain a threat to the Constitution if allowed to remain in office, and has acted in a manner grossly incompatible with self-governance and the rule of law. President Trump thus warrants impeachment and trial, removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States. 446](#_Toc31984980)

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# Introduction

This is a mostly chronological history of the Trump Era. It begins when Donald Trump was elected president of the United States by an electoral college vote of **306 to 232.** On December 19, 2016, the electors voted and gave him 304 votes. Trump lost the popular vote 62.9 million to 65.5 million - a margin of more than 2.6 million votes. Including all voters, Trump received 46.2% of the vote and Hillary Clinton received 48.2% of the vote. 5.6% of the voters voted for someone other than Trump or Hillary Clinton. If the **vote from California was not included**, Trump would have won the popular vote. Clinton received 61.7% of the vote in California with 4.3 million more votes than Trump. Not even Trump or his campaign staff believed that Trump would win and as a result he began his presidency with no idea how to be the president of the United States. Even if the election results were some kind of weird set of actions, it did illustrate what a large percentage of voters actually felt, and might even have understood, about what direction the country was going in.

Trump voters had “opinions” in many important areas that are not reflected in reality. In a poll by PPP pre-released to Rachel Maddow on MSNC on December 10, 2016 it was disclosed that:.

* Even though the Dow Jones Industrial average went from 7,949 to 19,615, 39% of Trump voters believed that the stock market went down under Obama.
* Even though the unemployment rate dropped form 7.8% in the Obama years, 67% of Trump voters believed that the unemployment rate rose under President Obama.
* 40% of Trump voters believed that Trump won the popular vote.

The poll also found that President Obama’s overall approval rating was at 50% but at 5% among Trump voters and that 29% of Trump voters believe that the California vote should not be included in the popular vote.

# Trump’s Picks

The Trump picks for his cabinet and his top advisors consist of some of the worst corporate offenders to be found. By “draining the swamp” Trump seems to have referred to his draining some of the swamp around the country and then bringing this scum to Washington, D.C. Trump’s proposed cabinet is best defined by the phrase “**the fox is guarding the hen house.**” His original list of proposed appointees included three generals and a number of millionaires and billionaires. His choices represented those persons **most opposed to the work of the very agencies that they will presumably lead**. The also represented those most likely to be charged with lying to the FBA and Congress as well as with a number of other crimes.

# Appointees who have left or were fired

Since taking office, almost 50% of his appointees have either been fired or left his administration. Those that have left or forced to leave Trump’s administration as of December 23, 2018:

• Reince Priebus (chief of staff),

• John F. Kelly (chief of staff)

• Rex Tillerson (Secretary of State)

• Steve Goldstein (undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs)

• Steve Bannon (deputy chief of staff),

• Katie Walsh (deputy chief of staff),

• James Comey (FBI director),

• Andrew McCabe (FBI Deputy Director),

• Sally Yates (US attorney general),

• Jeff Sessions (US attorney general)

• Ryan Zinke (Interior secretary)

• Scott Pruitt (Environmental Protection Agency administrator)

• David Shulkin (Secretary of Veterans Affairs)

• Don McGhan (White House Counsel)

• John Dowd (Trump lead lawyer)

• Ty Cobb (White House Special Counsel)

• Hope Hicks (White House Communications Director)

• Sean Spicer (press secretary),

• Jim Hagin (Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations)

• George Sifakis (assistant to the president and director of the Office of Public Liaison),

• Michael Flynn (national security adviser),

• KT McFarland, (deputy national security adviser),

• Nadia Schadlow (deputy national security adviser for strategy)

• Mira Ricardel (deputy national security adviser)

• Mike Dubke (Director of Communications),

• Josh Raffel (Deputy Communications Director)

• Nikki Haley (US Ambassador to the United Nations)

• Anthony Scaramucci (director of communications),

• Hope Hicks (communications director),

• Ezra Cohen-Watnick (senior intelligence director),

• Robin Townley (senior intelligence director for Africa),

• Gary Cohn (economic advisor),

• Michael Short (assistant press secretary),

• H.R. McMaster (National Security Adviser)

• Tera Dahl (National Security Council Spokesman),

• Mark Corallo (communications strategist for legal team),

• Derek Harvey (National Security Council advisor),

• Ezra Cohen-Watnick (National Security Council senior director for intelligence),

• Carl Icahn (presidential special adviser on regulatory reform),

• Sebastian Gorka (White House counterterrorism adviser),

• Tom Bossert (Homeland Security Adviser)

• Tom Homan (director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement)

• Walter Shaub (Office of Government Ethics director),

• Michael Anton (National Security Council)

• Rich Higgins (National Security Council strategic planning aide),

• William Bradford (head of the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy),

• Keith Schiller (director of Oval Office operations),

• Tom Price (secretary of health and human services),

• Jamie Johnson (head of faith-based and neighborhood partnerships at the Department of Homeland Security),

• John Feeley (U.S. ambassador to Panama),

• Rick Dearborn (Deputy White House chief of staff),

• Jeremy Katz (deputy at the National Economic Council),

• Carl Higbie (chief of external affairs for the Corporation for National and Community Services),

• Dina Powell (deputy national security adviser),

• Omarosa Manigault Newman (communications director at the Office of Public Liaison),

• Taylor Weyeneth (deputy chief of staff at the Office of National Drug Control Policy)

• Lawerence Muir (acting chief of staff and general counsel for the Office of National Drug Control Policy),

• Rob Porter (staff secretary),

• David Sorensen (Council on Environmental Quality and member of speechwriting team),

• Brenda Fitzgerald (Center for Disease Control and Prevention director),

• Rachel Brand (associate attorney general),

• Josh Raffel (deputy communications secretary),

• John McEntee (Personal Assistant),

# Trump original appointees included:

## Chief Strategist: Steve Bannon.

Bannon chaired the Trump presidential campaign and has run the news site Brietbart. Breitbart is known as the home of the “alt-Right.” Stories on the site include: “Bill Kristol: Republican spoiler, renegade Jew,” “Birth control makes women unattractive and crazy,” “Would you rather your child had feminism or cancer?” and “Gay rights have made us dumber, it’s time to get back in the closet.” Bannon has often been accused of being an anti-Semite but denies this charge claiming he is just a United States nationalist. Bannon was a Goldman Sachs banker.

## Chief of Staff: Reince Priebus. Priebus is the chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Priebus said his goal is “to create an economy that works for everyone, secure our borders, repeal and replace Obamacare and destroy radical Islamic terrorism.” On Cuba Priebus stated that “We’re not going to have a unilateral deal coming from Cuba back to the United States without some changes in their government’s repression, open markets, freedom of religion, political prisoners. These things need to change to have open and free relationships. And that’s what President-elect Trump believes and that’s where he is going to head.”

## White House Counsel: Donald F. McGahn II

McGahn served as legal counsel during the Trump campaign. He had served as a Republican appointed member of the Federal Election Commission. In that role he helped defeat Democratic efforts to control the influence of money in elections. He has been quite successful in helping Republican legislator facing ethics and fund-raising concerns. His uncle, Paddy McGahn, has been a good friend of Trump although has had a few differences over the years.

## Press Secretary: Sean Spicer. Spice was the Republican National Committee chief strategist.

Spicer is a Navy Reserve commander. Spicer worked as the assistant U.S. Trade Representative for media and public affairs in the President George W. Bush administration. Spicer cast doubt on the Intelligence community assessments of Russia's attempts to influence US elections. Spicer has become famous for inventing “alternate” facts while supporting Trump. He and Conway sometimes equal Trump in making false statements.

## Counselor to the President: Kellyanne Conway.

Conway is a Republican pollster and has acted as a major spokesperson for Trump on television. She managed the Trump campaign during the general election. Before that she was an advisor to several candidates and did polling as well. She worked on reaching out to women. She was a regular commentator on cable news programs who became famous for always avoiding the issue being discussed and instead attacking Hillary Clinton.

## Chief Policy Advisor: Stephen Miller

Stephen Miller attended Santa Monica High School and Duke University. At both he was a well known racist, gun lover, and writer of right-wing hate pieces. He wrote many of Donald Trump’s speeches during the presidential campaign. He is also a major author of Trump’s illegal Anti-Muslim travel ban. In support of Trump he has stated “**The president’s powers...represent the apex of executive authority**.” Miller served as “national campus coordinator, president, and co-founder” of a group, launched by the **David Horowitz Freedom Center**. He claimed that the its mission was to end “*the efforts of the radical left and its Islamist allies to destroy American values and disarm this country as it attempts to defend itself in a time of terror."* After working for Michelle Bachmann, **Miller took a communications job with Senator Jeff Sessions in 2009.**

## Budget Director: South Carolina Congressman Mick Mulvaney:

**Approved by Senate on February 16, 2017 by party (except McCain voting Nay) of 51-49**

Mulvaney is a founder of the House Freedom Caucus – often referred to as the “Shutdown Caucus” for their willingness to shut down the government rather than raise the U.S. debt limit. He has been a strong advocate for slashing the federal government even more than most of his Republican colleagues would support. He has opposed some of their proposals and is considered one of the most outspoken tea party advocates. He is one of those Republicans that believe that science is some sort of plot by a group of leftists who only seek an excuse to take profits from large corporations intent on extracting oil, selling DDT, and generally making a profit despite the cost to the environment and the health of the people of the world. Mulvaney’s role in the new administration will be to help move spending requests through the Republican-controlled Congress.

## Securities and Exchange Commission Head: Jay Clayton

**Approved by a vote of 61-37-2 on May 2, 2017**

Jay Clayton is a Wall Street lawyer who has represented Goldman Sachs and Barclays. He is expected, according to President Trump, to “undo many regulations which have stifled investment in American businesses, and restore oversight of financial industry in a way that does not harm American workers.” He helped Goldman Sachs get through regulatory scrutiny. His wife works at Goldman Sachs. With this and other appointments, Trump’s regime will have the power to change the way Wall Street is regulated (or not regulated).

## Attorney General: Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions.

**Approved by vote of 52-47 on February 8, 2017 with Democrat Manchun voting Yea.**

Sessions was one of the first members of Congress to endorse Trump. Sessions is a leader in Congress in opposition to comprehensive immigration reform. Sessions wrote in a 2015 Washington Post opinion piece: "... What we need now is immigration moderation: slowing the pace of new arrivals so that wages can rise, welfare rolls can shrink and the forces of assimilation can knit us all more closely together." Sessions is also a climate change skeptic and even believes that “Carbon pollution is CO2, and that's really not a pollutant; that's a plant food, and it doesn't harm anybody except that it might include temperature increases.” He was blocked in 1986 from becoming a federal judge due to charges of racism stemming from his calling a black assistant U.S. attorney “boy” and joking that he thought Klan members were "OK, until he learned that they smoked marijuana."

## Secretary of State: Rex Tillerson.

**Tillerson was approved by a vote of 56-43 on February 1, 2017.**

Tillerson is the head of Exon Mobil. Exon Mobil has a history of funding climate change denial and committing human right abuse around the world. Tillerson himself has made deals for Exon Mobil with repressive governments around the world including Equatorial Guinea in West Africa and Nigeria. He is a friend of Putin in Russia, made friends in Vietnam (which has not made China happy), challenged and lost oil rights in Venezuela, and made a deal in Iraq directly with the Kurdish administration in the north. Exon Mobil operates on six continents and has a stock market value in excess of $360 million. In short, Exon Mobil is the equivalent of a nation itself. According to Tillerson, American policy should be based on securing affordable access to energy and “where it comes from should be of little consequence to us, if it’s reliable.” Since the United States imposed sanctions on Russia’s oil industry in 2014 over its intervention in Ukraine, Exon Mobile has billions of dollars in deals that can’t move forward until the sanctions are lifted.

## CIA Director: Kansas Congressman Mike Pompeo.

**Pompeo was approved by a vote of 66-32 on January 23, 2017.**

Pompeo is a leader of the Tea Party in Congress. One of Hillary Clinton’s chief opponents in the Benghazi investigation. He has called for the continuance of bulk collection of domestic calling records. He has denounced the 2009 decision to close CIA black-site prisons as well as a requirement for interrogators to follow the Army Field Manual. Pompeo has received $357,000 in campaign contributions from the Koch brothers.

## National Security Advisor: former General Michael Flynn.

**Resigned on February 13, 2017 due to lying to Trump concerning contacts with Russia regarding sanctions.**

Flynn was fired as chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency by President Obama. Flynn has made many hateful comments regarding Islam and believes in a wide range of far-right theories. In the introduction to the book “The Field of Flight,” Flynn wrote that radical Islamists: "are not alone, and are allied with countries and groups who, though not religious fanatics, share their hatred of the West, particularly the United States and Israel." The introduction continued, "Those allies include North Korea, Russia, China, Cuba and Venezuela." His son even claimed that Hillary Clinton was running a pedophile ring out of the back room of a Washington pizza parlor. General Flynn has also praised Breitbart’s racist Milo Yiannopoulos. Flynn said, in an October 2015 interview with the New York times that the CIA has “lost sight of who they actually work for.” “They work for the American people. They don’t work for the president of the United States.” Trump has echoed the message in response to the C.I.A report that Russia interfered with the U.S. election that the C.I.A. people involved are “**the same people that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction**/”

## Director of National Security: Dan Coats.

Coats is a former Indiana senator. He also served as ambassador to Germany under George W. Bush. He is known to be strongly anti-gay. He helped Bush sell the Iraq war. He was banned from entering Russia in 2014 as a reprisal for backing U.S. sanctions against Russia following the annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine.

## Ambassador to the United Nations: South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley.

**Approved on January 24, 2017 by a vote of 96-4**

Haley is the daughter of Indian immigrants and began as a Tea Party advocate. She has very little foreign policy or diplomacy experience. As governor, she helped bring down the Confederate flag from the grounds of the South Carolina State House. She originally endorsed Marco Rubio stating that

"Donald Trump does everything I taught my children not to do in kindergarten."

As governor, she called for the removal of the confederate flag from the capitol. She backed the effort of faith groups to settle refugees in South Carolina as part of Obama’s resettlement plan. Other than that, she has to foreign policy experience.

## Ambassador to Israel: David Friedman.

**Approved by the Senate on March 23, 2017 on a vote of 52-48 with Democrats Manchin and Menendez voting Aye.**

Friedman is a bankruptcy attorney. He has represented Trump in legal areas surrounding Trump’s Atlantic City casinos. He has been an opponent of the Unites States support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He has also been a major supporter of the Jewish settlement building in the occupied West Bank. He supports moving the capital of Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (where he owns a residence). J Street, a liberal pro-Israel group based in Washington, said it was “vehemently” opposed to the nomination of Friedman. “As someone who has been a leading American friend of the settlement movement, who lacks any diplomatic or policy credentials and who has **attacked liberal Jews** who support two states as ‘**worse than kapos**’, Friedman should be **beyond the pale** for senators considering who should represent the United States in Israel," it said. Kapos were Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps who the SS put in charge of other inmates and were accused of brutal treatment of prisoners.

## Secretary of Homeland Security: Four-star General John Kelly

**Approved by Senate on January 29, 2017 in vote of 88-11.**

Kelly delivered a speech in 2010 attacking antiwar Americans. "If anyone thinks you can somehow thank them for their service, and not support the cause for which they fight – our country – these people are lying to themselves. ... More important, they are slighting our warriors and mocking their commitment to this nation." He considers those being held at Guantanamo as “detainees, not prisoners.” Kelly believes that the U.S. has the right to build a wall but more needs to be done to reduce the number of people fleeing from violence and seeking economic opportunity. He played a role in negotiating the Alliance for Prosperity in 2014 which is scheduled to invest $1 billion in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Kelly was on the board of the School of the Americas which trains Central Americans warriors who have often become members of death squads.

## Secretary of Defense: Four-star general James "Mad Dog" Mattis.

**Approved by Senate on January 20, 2017 in vote of 98-1.**

He left the military in 2013 and thus is ineligible to become Secretary of Defense unless Congress gives him a waiver from the seven-year rule. Mattis appears to have convinced Trump that torture is not an effective method of getting information. A rule set up to maintain civilian control of the military. He said as part of a panel in 2005 that “You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn’t wear a veil. You know, guys like that ain’t got no manhood left anyway. So it’s a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them. Actually it’s quite fun to fight them, you know. It’s a hell of a hoot. It’s fun to shoot some people.” Mattis is a member of the blood testing company Theranos which is now under federal criminal investigation.

## Secretary for the Army: Vincent Viola.

**Withdrew from consideration on February 4, 2017**

Viola is worth about $1.8 billion and is the founder of a high-speed trading company. Viola is a retired Army major, graduated from West Point, was a chairman of the New York Mercantile Exchange, founder of Virtu Financial, and is the owner of the Florida Panthers of the National Hockey League. Viola will report to Mad Dog Mattis if both are confirmed. Viola stated that: “A primary focus of my leadership will be ensuring that America’s soldiers have the ways and means to fight and win across the full spectrum of conflict.”

## Treasury Secretary: Steven Mnuchin.

**Approved by the Senate on January 13, 2017 on a party line vote (except Democrat Manchin) of 53-47.**

Munchin is a former partner in Goldman Sachs and has a reported net worth of $46 million. He co-founded OneWest Bank which became a "foreclosure machine" under an agreement with the federal government. OneWest made more than $1 billion through at least 36,000 foreclosures at the depth of the financial crisis. They also targeted the elderly with reverse mortgages.

## Administrator of the Small Business Administration: Linda McMahon.

**Approved by the Senate on February 14, 2017 on a vote of 81-19.**

She has a reported net worth of $1.6 billion. She is President and CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc. (WWE) and has lost twice as a candidate for the Senate from Connecticut. She has been a larger donor to the Trump Foundation. She also donated $7 million to the pro-Trump super PAC. Trump is a fan of WWE and was even inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame as a "superstar" in 2013. He has hosted WWE events at his casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey and attends many of their events. This is just a part of Trump’s bizarro reality.

## National Economic Council director: Gary Cohn.

A 25-year veteran of Goldman Sachs, Cohn is now president and Chief Operating Officer. Cohn now becomes the third former Goldman Sachs officer (Mnuchin, Bannon, and Cohn) to join the Trump regime. Trump campaigned against the influence of Goldman Sachs. A Trump election commercial warned about “a global power structure that is responsible for the economic decisions that have robbed our working class, stripped our country of its wealth and put that money into the pockets of a handful of large corporations and political entities.” The face of Goldman’s chief executive, Lloyd C. Blankfein was among the images that flashed on the screen.

## Assistant to the President: Peter Navarro.

Navarro will be the director of trade and industrial policy and head the new White House Trade Council – adding another bureaucratic office dealing with trade. Navarro, a professor of economics and public policy at the University of California at Irvine, is an outspoken critic of China’s economic policy. He has a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. He served in the Peace Corps in Southeast Asia. Navarro was an early Trump supporter and co-wrote with Ross a white paper for Trump on trade, regulatory and energy policies. Navarro has lost a number of political races including for mayor, congress, and city council. Navarro’s view of the Chinese government is that it is a “despicable, parasitic, brutal, brass-knuckled, crass, callous, amoral, ruthless and totally totalitarian imperialist power that reigns over the world’s leading cancer factory, its most prolific propaganda mill and the biggest police state and prison on the face of the earth.”

## Secretary of Commerce: Wilbur Ross.

**Approved by a vote of 72-2-1 on Feb. 27, 2017**

Considered the “king of bankruptcy,” Ross is reportedly worth $2.9 billion. He bought distressed companies in declining industries like steel, coal and textiles and turning a profit at the expense of workers. He will face serious conflict of interest charges. He owned the Sago mine in West Virginia in which 12 miners were killed in 2006.

## United States Trade Representative: Robert Lighthizer

**Approved by a vote of 82-14-4 on May 11, 2017**

Robert Lighthizer was deputy U.S. trade representative under President Reagan. He has advocated a tougher stand on trade agreements including those with China. He has spent the time since working in the Reagan administration as a lawyer representing U.S. steelmakers in case concerning trade. His appointment supports Trump claims to oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the North American Free Trade Agreement. In 2010 Lighthizer gave testimony before Congress in which he said that years of passivity had allowed the U.S.-China trade deficit to grow “to the point where it is widely recognized as a major threat to our economy.”

## Secretary of Education: Betsy DeVos.

**Approved by a vote of 50-50 on Feb. 7, 2017 with Vice President breaking the tie**

She is a major contributor to Republican Party candidates and has a reported net worth of $5.1 billion. She is a strong voucher advocate for use by private and parochial schools. She has not been a supporter of public schools - or “government” schools as she likes to call them. Her brother, Erik Prince, is the founder of the mercenary company Blackwater that made large profits off the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Four of its employees were found guilty of a 2007 massacre in Baghdad. Betsy DeVos’ father, Edgar Prince, was an early supporter of such religious right wing groups as Focus on the Family the Family Research Council. Edgar and his son Erik donated $150,000 to Vice President Mike Pence. The Prince family helped to fund organizations seeking to criminalize abortion, privatize education, block gay rights, and other right-wing attempts to impose the view of Christianity**.** The declared goal of Pence and the DeVos/Prince families is to move the United States toward becoming a Christian theocracy.

## Secretary of Energy: Rick Perry.

**Approved by vote of 62-37-1 on March 2, 2017**

Perry is a former governor of Texas. During his run for the presidency he called for the elimination of the Department of Energy. The Department of Energy with its more than 100,000 employees oversees the United States nuclear weapons security and has played a major role in both Obama’s climate policy and nuclear agreement with Iran. It regulates fracking and off-shore drilling. He supports the opening of more land for drilling and hydraulic fracking as well as eliminating subsidies for renewable energy. Perry is a climate change denier. Perry referred to efforts to reverse global warning, in his book Fed Up!, as “hysteria” and described the science as a “ contrived phony mess.” Rep. Frank Pallone, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee summarized the nomination: "It is also deeply unsettling that our current Secretary of Energy, a renowned nuclear physicist, could be succeeded by a contestant on Dancing with the Stars. Governor Perry is simply not qualified for this position and should be rejected.” Perry did say during the presidential campaign that “Let no one be mistaken – Donald Trump’s candidacy is a cancer on conservatism, and it must be clearly diagnosed, excised and discarded.” Perry serves on the board of Energy Transfer Partners which is the company pushing to build the Dakota Access Pipeline.

## Secretary of the Interior: Congressman Ryan Zinke.

**Approved by vote of 68-31-1 on March 1, 2017**

Originally it was reported that Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers was Trump’s pick for the head of Interior. Rogers is a climate-change skeptic as well as an advocate for expanding the development of oil and gas. Trump changed course and instead has offered the job to Montana’s Ryan Zinke. Zinke was an early Trump supporter. Zinke played football for the Oregon Ducks and has a bachelor’s degree in geology, a master’s degree in business finance (University of San Diego), and a master’s degree in global leadership (University of San Diego). Zinke has spent most of adult life as a Navy SEAL. Zinke was quoted regarding human-caused climate change with the statement that: “It’s not a hoax, but it’s not proven science either.” He has endorsed white supremacists like Taylor Rose (a former vice president of the Youth for Western Civilization). The Interior Department oversees energy exploration on the nation’s public lands and waters. It also manages water in 17 western states. Zinke has been a strong advocate for keeping the nation’s public land under federal control although he also supports state control of energy development on federal lands. He is in favor of mining and logging on these federal lands. The Interior Department under Obama has sought to move his climate change and renewable energy agendas.

## Environmental Agency administrator: Oklahoma State Senator Scott Pruitt.

**Approved by a party line (except Heitkamp, Manchin Aye; McCain, Donner NV) of 52-46-2 on Feb. 17, 2017**

**Resigned from Secretary of the Environmental Protection Agency on July5, 2018**

Strongly supported by the Koch brothers in his losing bids for Congress and lieutenant governor. He is an active opponent of the EPA which has twice sued. He is also a climate change denier who fought the expansion of the Clean Water Act and formed an alliance with energy corporations to fight air-pollution and climate regulations. In 2014, for example, Pruitt sent the EPA a letter accusing federal regulators of overstating the level of air pollution caused by oil drilling for natural gas. The letter was drafted by lawyers at Devon Energy. Senator Bernie Sanders position on Pruitt is clear: “Pruitt's record is not only that of being a climate change denier, but also someone who has worked closely with the fossil fuel industry to make this country **more dependent, not less, on fossil fuels**." Pruitt has described himself as “a **leading advocate against the EPA's activist agenda**.” It seems clear that Pruitt will serve as a representative of the fossil fuel industry instead of working to protect the environment and the health of the people of the world.

## Secretary of Health and Human Services: Tom Price.

**Approved by straight party vote of 52 Yea, 47 Nay, 1 Non Voting (Caskill D) on Feb. 10, 2017**

He has a reported net worth of $13.5 billion. He spent ten years as a congressman from Georgia. He is a **strong critic of the Affordable Care Act** and has worked to end the law ever since its passage in 2009. Dr. Patrick Romano, director of a California-contracted quality and safety research program at UC Davis in Sacramento, said in an email that Price “**may be the most dangerous individual ever nominated to lead”** the agency since Medicare began in the 1960s. “He offers a veneer of credibility and prestige, (as an orthopedic surgeon and former Emory University professor), an engaging personal manner according to those who have worked with him and strong relationships with Congressional leaders,” wrote Romano, who also is co-editor of AcademyHealth’s journal Health Services Research. But, Romano continued, “**his underlying agenda is to dismantle the essential programs that he will be responsible for managing**.”

Price is also affiliated with the right-wing Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS) which supports the idea that **vaccines cause autism**, HIV does not cause AIDS and Obama may have won the presidency by hypnotizing voters. The AAPS also promotes the idea that it is "evil" and "immoral" for doctors to participate in Medicare and Medicaid programs. He is also a member of the American Medical Association (AMA).

## Secretary of Housing and Urban Development: Ben Carson.

**Approved by a vote of 58-41-1 on March 2, 2017**

Carson’s reported net worth is $26 million. Carson is a Pediatric neurosurgeon. Carson has opposed desegregating public housing, which he's called a "failed social experiment." Carson also has opposed such social safety-net programs as rental assistance, public housing and various community development grants – saying "it's not the government's job" to take care of the needy. He has admitted publicly that he is not qualified to lead the agency.

## Secretary of Agriculture: Sonny Perdue

**Approved by a vote of 87-11-1 on April 24, 2017**

Perdue is a veterinarian and a former Georgia governor. As governor, he was a free-trade advocate and supported NAFTA. In particular, he promoted trade with China.

## Secretary of Veterans Affairs: David Shulkin

David Shulkin currently serves as the Under Secretary for Health and is the Chief Executive of the Veterans Health Administration. Dr. Shulkin is a physician. He previously served as President at Morristown Medical Center, New York’s Beth Israel Medical Center, Goryeb Children’s Hospital, Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute, and the Atlantic Health System Accountable Care Organization.

## Secretary of Transportation: Elaine Chao.

**Approved by a vote of 93-6 on January 31, 2017**

Chao is the wife of Senator Mitch McConnell and has a reported net worth of $22.2 million. She served as deputy secretary of transportation under George H.W. Bush and secretary of labor under George W. Bush. Chao served as a member of Wells Fargo’s board of directors during the time in which the bank created millions of fake accounts. Her family owns the Foremost Group. Foremost buys vessels and ships bulk cargo, such as iron and coal, around the world. One of their ships was seized by the Colombian Coast Guard and 90 pounds of cocaine was found on board. The ships are registered in Liberia to avoid paying taxes in the United States. The company is growing, with seven more ships being built in China and Japan. Their crews usually have between 20 and 30 workers who are mostly Chinese. The use of these ships seems to be at odds with Trump’s stated desire to stop shipping jobs to other countries.

## Secretary of Labor: Andy Puzder.

**Withdrew from nomination on February 15, 2017**

Puzder is the CEO of CKE Restaurants which include Hardee’s and Carl’s Jr. Even though he earned more than $4.5 million in 2012, he opposes the raising of the minimum wage as well as the currently proposed overtime rules. He has suggested replacing workers by automating their jobs in fast food restaurants. He has even criticized paid sick leave policies. Carl’s Jr. has been running ads of women in bikinis eating burgers and drooling them on their bodies. Puzder has been quoted in the publication Entrepreneur as saying: “I like beautiful women eating burgers in bikinis. I think it's very American.” Trump seems to agree. Puzder’s job as labor secretary is overseeing the federal laws and regulations regarding minimum wage, overtime and worker safety - laws which his companies have been found to violate. Puzder backed Trump after he had already donated to the campaigns of Marco Rubio, Rick Perry, Scott Walker, Carly Fiorina, and Jeb Bush. He is known to have been heavily influenced by the writings of Ayn Rand.

## Secretary of Labor: R. Alexander Acosta

**Approved on April 27, 2917 on a vote of 60-38-2**

On February 16, 2017, President Trump named Richard Alexander Acosta as his replacement for labor secretary nominee. Acosta earned undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard University. He currently serves as dean of the Florida International University school of law located in Miami. Acosta is of Cuban descent.

Acosta served as a clerk for then U.S. Appeals Court Justice **Samuel A. Alito Jr.** He was appointed to the National Labor Relations Board (**NLRB**) by **President George W. Bush**, who also appointed him in 2009 to assistant attorney general in the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. He filed a brief defending an Ohio law that allowed people to challenge the legitimacy of a voter at a polling place, even though the Justice Department was not involved in the case.

He was appointed to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, where he went after high-profile defendants such as Jack Abramoff and UBS, resulting in the Swiss bank paying more than $750 million in fines for a tax-avoidance scheme.

In 2011, in testimony before Congress, Acosta testified that “*we are a nation build [sic] on principles of freedom, and high on the list of freedoms is freedom of religious expression. Indeed, as is well known to this Committee, this freedom pre-dates our Constitution*.”

While Acosta was at the Justice Department, the department’s Office of Inspector General found that Acosta “*did not sufficiently supervise*” a former senior division official who favored hiring people with “*conservative political or ideological affiliations*” over those with more civil rights experience.

“*It is hard to believe that Mr. Acosta would now be nominated to lead a federal agency tasked with promoting lawful hiring practices and safe workplaces*,” said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

In 2010, Acosta wrote an article for the Florida International University Law Review advocating that the National Labor Relations Board shift from a *“pre-World War II quasi-judicial administrative agency model*” to one in which it would issue rules. “***Rulemaking*** *is a better, more democratic, more stable, more transparent, and more modern path for quasi-legislative enactments*,” he wrote. He said that the NLRB “*should learn from other agencies and it should hire staff experienced with the specific challenges of rulemaking*.” **This appears to differ from President Trump’s view on the behavior of agencies.**

Acosta appears to be a **traditional Republican conservative**. **AFL-CIO President Richard Trumpka** stated that “Unlike Andy Puzder, Alexander Acosta’s nomination deserves serious consideration.” “In one day, we’ve gone from a fast-food CEO who routinely violates labor law to a public servant with experience enforcing it. We will of course review Mr. Acosta’s record as thoroughly as we did the previous nominee’s.”

Acosta did not contribute to the presidential campaign of Donald Trump.

## Federal Communications Commission Chair: Ajit Pai

Trump designated Ajit Pai as the chair of the FCC on January 24, 2017. Republicans will now have a majority on the Commission. Pai has been a member of the Commission since 2012 and is known as a supporter of free-markets and opposed to many of the regulations approved in during the Obama administration. Pai stated recently that “We need to fire up the weed whacker and remove those rules that are holding back investment, innovation, and job creation.” He had worked as general counsel for Verizon. He has been seen as an opponent of net neutrality – meaning that he opposed rules that restrict broadband providers from providing different speeds to different customers. The change he advocates will have to go through a formal process.

Trump has given more than one version of most of his campaign proposals. His selection of cabinet and others in his government may represent where he is heading better than his campaign promises.

# Senator Votes on Trump Nominees

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Votes on Trump Nominees | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | Yea | Nay | NonVoting |
| Gillibrand (D-NY) | 1 | 26 | 0 |
| Merkley (D-OR) | 2 | 25 | 0 |
| Sanders (I-VT) | 2 | 25 | 0 |
| Booker (D-NJ) | 3 | 24 | 0 |
| Harris (D-CA) | 3 | 24 | 0 |
| Warren (D-MA) | 3 | 24 | 0 |
| Blumenthal (D-CT) | 4 | 22 | 1 |
| Cardin (D-MD) | 7 | 22 | 0 |
| Markey (D-MA) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Murray (D-WA) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Reed (D-RI) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Schumer (D-NY) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Udall (D-NM) | 7 | 22 | 0 |
| Van Hollen (D-MD) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Whitehouse (D-RI) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Wyden (D-OR) | 5 | 22 | 0 |
| Cantwell (D-WA) | 6 | 21 | 0 |
| Heinrich (D-NM) | 6 | 21 | 0 |
| Franken (D-MN) | 7 | 20 | 0 |
| Hirono (D-HI) | 7 | 20 | 0 |
| Leahy (D-VT) | 7 | 20 | 0 |
| Duckworth (D-IL) | 8 | 19 | 0 |
| Durbin (D-IL) | 7 | 19 | 1 |
| Schatz (D-HI) | 8 | 19 | 0 |
| Casey (D-PA) | 9 | 18 | 0 |
| Feinstein (D-CA) | 9 | 18 | 0 |
| Hassan (D-NH) | 9 | 18 | 0 |
| Menendez (D-NJ) | 9 | 18 | 0 |
| Stabenow (D-MI) | 9 | 18 | 0 |
| Brown (D-OH) | 10 | 17 | 0 |
| Coons (D-DE) | 10 | 17 | 0 |
| Klobuchar (D-MN) | 10 | 17 | 0 |
| Murphy (D-CT) | 9 | 17 | 1 |
| Bennet (D-CO) | 11 | 16 | 0 |
| Cortez Masto (D-NV) | 11 | 16 | 0 |
| Kaine (D-VA) | 11 | 16 | 0 |
| Peters (D-MI) | 8 | 16 | 3 |
| Shaheen (D-NH) | 11 | 16 | 0 |
| Carper (D-DE) | 13 | 14 | 0 |
| Nelson (D-FL) | 13 | 14 | 0 |
| Tester (D-MT) | 14 | 13 | 0 |
| Warner (D-VA) | 14 | 13 | 0 |
| McCaskill (D-MO) | 14 | 12 | 1 |
| **Donnelly (D-IN)** | 16 | 10 | 1 |
| **King (I-ME)** | 18 | 9 | 0 |
| **Baldwin (D-WI)** | 14 | 7 | 0 |
| **Heitkamp (D-ND)** | 20 | 7 | 0 |
| **Manchin (D-WV)** | 22 | 5 | 0 |
| Collins (R-ME) | 26 | 1 | 0 |
| Gardner (R-CO) | 16 | 1 | 0 |
| McCain (R-AZ) | 25 | 1 | 1 |
| Murkowski (R-AK) | 25 | 1 | 1 |
| Paul (R-KY) | 23 | 1 | 3 |
| Sasse (R-NE) | 26 | 1 | 0 |
| Alexander (R-TN) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Barrasso (R-WY) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Blunt (R-MO) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Boozman (R-AR) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Burr (R-NC) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Capito (R-WV) | 26 | 0 | 1 |
| Cassidy (R-LA) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Cochran (R-MS) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Corker (R-TN) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Cornyn (R-TX) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Cotton (R-AR) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Crapo (R-ID) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Cruz (R-TX) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Daines (R-MT) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Enzi (R-WY) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Ernst (R-IA) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Fischer (R-NE) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Flake (R-AZ) | 26 | 0 | 1 |
| Graham (R-SC) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Grassley (R-IA) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Hatch (R-UT) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Heller (R-NV) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Hoeven (R-ND) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Inhofe (R-OK) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Isakson (R-GA) | 14 | 0 | 13 |
| Johnson (R-WI) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Kennedy (R-LA) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Lankford (R-OK) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Lee (R-UT) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| McConnell (R-KY) | 26 | 0 | 1 |
| Moran (R-KS) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Perdue (R-GA) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Portman (R-OH) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Risch (R-ID) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Roberts (R-KS) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Rounds (R-SD) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Rubio (R-FL) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Scott (R-SC) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Shelby (R-AL) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Strange (R-AL) | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| Sullivan (R-AK) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Thune (R-SD) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Tillis (R-NC) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Toomey (R-PA) | 24 | 0 | 3 |
| Wicker (R-MS) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| Young (R-IN) | 27 | 0 | 0 |
|  |  |  |  |
| Source: www.senate.gov/legislative | | |  |

# Trump Quotes that Make Americans Proud to be Americans and May Help to Explain Trump’s Cabinet Picks

“When Iran, when they circle our beautiful destroyers with their little boats, and they make gestures at our people that they shouldn’t be allowed to make, they will be shot out of the water." –Donald Trump, threatening to go to war with Iran over rude hand gestures, Pensacola, Florida, (Sept. 9, 2016)

"That makes me smart." –Donald Trump, responding to Hillary Clinton’s suggestion that he pays no federal income tax (Sept. 26, 2016)

"He’s not a war hero. He’s a war hero because he was captured. I like people that weren’t captured." –Donald Trump on John McCain.

"We won with poorly educated. I love the poorly educated." –Donald Trump on his performance with poorly educated voters who helped him win the Nevada Caucus, Feb. 23, 2016

"I know more about ISIS than the generals do, believe me... I would bomb the shit out of them." –Donald Trump, Nov. 13, 2015

"I love the old days, you know? You know what I hate? There's a guy totally disruptive, throwing punches, we're not allowed punch back anymore. ... I'd like to punch him in the face, I'll tell ya." –Donald Trump on how he would handle a protester in Nevada, sparking roaring applause from the audience, Feb. 22, 2016

"There may be somebody with tomatoes in the audience. If you see somebody getting ready to throw a tomato, knock the crap out of them, would you? Seriously. Okay? Just knock the hell -- I promise you, I will pay for the legal fees." –Donald Trump, encouraging violence at his rallies, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Feb. 1, 2016

"He referred to my hands, if they're small, something else must be small. I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee it." –Donald Trump, defending his penis size about a joke by Republican rival Marco Rubio, GOP presidential debate, March 3, 2016

"You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes. Blood coming out of her wherever." –Donald Trump, insulting Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly over questions she asked during the first Republican primary debate

"His father was with Lee Harvey Oswald prior to Oswald's being – you know, shot. I mean, the whole thing is ridiculous. What is this, right prior to his being shot, and nobody even brings it up. They don't even talk about that. That was reported, and nobody talks about it." –Donald Trump, suggesting that Ted Cruz's father may have been involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy” [Fox News interview, May 3, 2016]

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems...they're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists." –Donald Trump

"My entire life, I've watched politicians bragging about how poor they are, how they came from nothing, how poor their parents and grandparents were. And I said to myself, if they can stay so poor for so many generations, maybe this isn't the kind of person we want to be electing to higher office. How smart can they be? They're morons." –Donald Trump, New York Times interview with Maureen Dowd, Nov.

"You know I’m automatically attracted to beautiful — I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait. And when you’re a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything." –Donald Trump in a 2005 interview with Access Hollywood’s Billy Bush

"From a moral standpoint, I believe in it. But you also have to get elected. And there’s no way a Republican is going to beat a Democrat when the Republican is saying, 'We’re going to cut your Social Security’ and the Democrat is saying, ‘We’re going to keep it and give you more." –Donald Trump, privately explaining to House Speaker Paul Ryan that he supports cutting Social Security even though he says the opposite on the campaign trail (Bloomberg Businessweek, May 26, 2016)

# Trump on Twitter

[Donald J. Trump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)

[✔ @realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)

....likewise, billions of dollars gets brought into Mexico through the border. We get the killers, drugs & crime, they get the money!

[3:53 AM - 13 Jul 2015](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/620546522556534784)

# Making Friends in Congress

From New York Times List of Trump Twitter Insults

## On Senator Lindsey Graham:

[“Really sad”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/774637168769830912)2016-09-10

[“failed presidential candidate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/729004564075012096)2016-05-07

[“no honor!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/729004564075012096)2016-05-07

[“I ran him out of the race like a little boy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/726800215718645760)2016-05-01

[“in the end he had no support”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/726800215718645760)2016-05-01

[“ALL TALK AND NO ACTION!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/713004219234709505)2016-03-24

[“Failed presidential candidate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706808780600844288)2016-03-07

[“should respect me”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706808780600844288)2016-03-07

[“nasty!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706808780600844288)2016-03-07

[“dumb mouthpiece”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/699989306333650944)2016-02-17

[“had zero in his presidential run before dropping out in disgrace”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/699966498819940353)2016-02-17

[“embarrassed himself with his failed run for President”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688020474744467460)2016-01-15

[“embarrasses himself with endorsement of Bush”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688020474744467460)2016-01-15

[“so easy to beat!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/668090367284281344)

## Senator Ted Cruz: Ted Cruz

[“Lyin', he should drop out of the race-stop wasting time & money”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727636035149139968)2016-05-03

[“really went wacko today”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727634574298255361)2016-05-03

[“Made all sorts of crazy charges”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727634574298255361)2016-05-03

[“Can't function under pressure”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727634574298255361)2016-05-03

[“not very presidential”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727634574298255361)2016-05-03

[“Sad!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/727634574298255361)2016-05-03

[“can never beat Hilary Clinton”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/725647068459454464)2016-04-28

[“has NO path to victory”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/725648706385633280)2016-04-28

[“weak”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724568416338759680)2016-04-25

[“desperate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724568416338759680)2016-04-25

[“has to team up with a guy who openly can't stand him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724568416338759680)2016-04-25

[“mathematically dead and totally desperate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724445148910915584)2016-04-25

[“Drop out LYIN' Ted”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/723274222907301888)2016-04-21

[“all he can do is be a spoiler, never a nice thing to do”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/722767517349978112)2016-04-20

[“hates New York”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/722181629528141824)2016-04-18

[“can't win with the voters so he has to sell himself to the bosses”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/722016321119121409)2016-04-18

[“Hillary would destroy him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/722016321119121409)2016-04-18

[“can't get votes (I am millions ahead of him)”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/721694330805755904)2016-04-17

[“has to get his delegates from the Republican bosses”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/721694330805755904)2016-04-17

[“Despite a rigged delegate system, I am hundreds of delegates ahead of him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/721693297429901312)2016-04-17

[“attacked New Yorkers and New York values- we don't forget!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/718159369033162752)2016-04-07

[“weak”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/714617467839111173)2016-03-29

[“losing big”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/714617467839111173)2016-03-29

[“just another dishonest politician”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/712727046913462272)2016-03-23

[“Mormons don't like LIARS!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710920670608236544)2016-03-18

[“Who should star in a reboot of Liar Liar- Hillary Clinton or Ted Cruz? Let me know”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710534544865239040)2016-03-17

[“a big problem!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710442630207901696)2016-03-17

[“desperate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710409594204524544)2016-03-17

[“his lying is getting worse”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710409594204524544)2016-03-17

[“can't win!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710409594204524544)2016-03-17

[“bought and paid for by lobbyists!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709690378778230785)2016-03-15

[“he has accomplished absolutely nothing”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703984812105793536)2016-02-28

[“another all talk, no action pol!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703984812105793536)2016-02-28

[“choker”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703251956198875138)2016-02-26

[“a nasty guy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703218582310641667)2016-02-26

[“loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703218582310641667)2016-02-26

[“lies like a dog-over and over again!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702149896325890048)2016-02-23

[“does not have the right 'temperment' to be President”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702147760926011393)2016-02-23

[“disloyal”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702141081027104769)2016-02-23

[“biggest liar in politics!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/701871659150548993)2016-02-22

[“a true lowlife pol!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/701043432354095108)2016-02-20

[“a cheater!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/698661220258357248)2016-02-14

[“holds the Bible high and then lies and misrepresents the facts!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/698661220258357248)2016-02-14

[“Nasty”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/698660826463539201)2016-02-14

[“cheater”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/698263859753316352)2016-02-12

[“I have standing to sue him for not being a natural born citizen”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/698231571594276866)2016-02-12

[“should be immediately disqualified in Iowa”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/695133044940759040)2016-02-04

[“just lied again”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/694979360441384960)2016-02-03

[“told thousands of caucusgoers (voters) that Trump was strongly in favor of ObamaCare and 'choice' - a total lie!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/694888332099239936)2016-02-03

[“fraud”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/694885775431835648)2016-02-03

[“sent out a VOTER VIOLATION certificate to thousands of voters”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/694884902618165248)2016-02-03

[“didn't win Iowa, he illegally stole it”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/694878058633936896)2016-02-03

[“totally unelectable”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693782388564865024)2016-01-31

[“deceptive”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693771408896229378)2016-01-31

[“can't even get a Senator like @BenSasse, who is easy, to endorse him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693243553271713792)2016-01-30

[“Not one Senator is endorsing Canada Ted!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693243553271713792)2016-01-30

[“will do anything to stay at the trough”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/691743513483026432)2016-01-25

[“dropping like a rock”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/691743052529012736)2016-01-25

[“a nervous wreck”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/691742501212983296)2016-01-25

[“reckless”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/691742501212983296)2016-01-25

[“in bed w/ Wall St.”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/690717760205275136)2016-01-23

[“puppet!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/690709138884661248)2016-01-23

[“people do not like Ted”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/689519657414320128)2016-01-19

[“a nervous wreck”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/689429603614502913)2016-01-19

[“falling in the polls”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/689263744443138049)2016-01-19

[“spending $millions on ads paid for by his N.Y. bosses”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688829594472939520)2016-01-17

[“hypocrite”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688443772565348352)2016-01-16

[“When will @TedCruz give all the New York based campaign contributions back to the special interests that control him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688426349652910080)2016-01-16

[“why did he accept money from people who espouse gay marriage?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688425749129211905)2016-01-16

[“the ultimate hypocrite”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688393139435008000)2016-01-16

[“says one thing for money, does another for votes”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688393139435008000)2016-01-16

[“did not list on his personal disclosure form personally guaranteed loans from banks. They own him!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688352797251792896)2016-01-16

[“The Ted Cruz wiseguy apology to the people of New York is a disgrace”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688333063093374976)2016-01-16

[“Goldman Sachs owns him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688328034651361280)2016-01-16

[“not much of a reformer”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688328034651361280)2016-01-16

[“not believable”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/688327093214662657)2016-01-16

[“not nice”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/687128203031375873)2016-01-13

[“would speak behind my back, get caught, and then deny it”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/676167468780412929)2015-12-13

[“should not make statements behind closed doors to his bosses”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675297372642148352)2015-12-11

[“he will fall like all others”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675296416529534976)2015-12-11

## Senator Rand Paul:

[“failed presidential candidate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706149793697902592)2016-03-05

[“made a fool of himself”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706149793697902592)2016-03-05

[“lowly”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/680151064188948480)2015-12-24

[“didn't get the right gene”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/642788935530344448)2015-09-12

[“Lightweight”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/642788749030608896)2015-09-12

[“Why is @RandPaul allowed to take advantage of the people of Kentucky”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/630907466008653824)2015-08-11

[“truly weird”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/630901938608017413)2015-08-11

[“reminds me of a spoiled brat without a properly functioning brain”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/630901938608017413)

## Senator Marco Rubio:

[“bought and paid for by lobbyists!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709690378778230785)2016-03-15

[“worst voting record in the U.S. Senate in many years”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709595310939643905)2016-03-15

[“will never MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709595310939643905)2016-03-15

[“dishonest lightweight”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706829345143316480)2016-03-07

[“he is scamming Florida”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706829345143316480)2016-03-07

[“fraud lightweight”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706532975782006784)2016-03-06

[“big loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706353772751163392)2016-03-06

[“failed presidential candidate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706179933480099840)2016-03-05

[“Rubio puts out ad that my pilot was a drug dealer- not true, not my pilot!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705565746676551680)2016-03-04

[“never even shows up to vote”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705357122859614209)2016-03-03

[“worst record”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705357122859614209)2016-03-03

[“a joke!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705357122859614209)2016-03-03

[“Interesting how my numbers have gone so far up since lightweight Marco Rubio has turned nasty. Love it!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705170546003218432)2016-03-02

[“Phony”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704440884029493248)2016-02-29

[“treated America's ICE officers 'like absolute trash' in order to pass Obama's amnesty”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704023054813433856)2016-02-28

[“gave amnesty to criminal aliens guilty of 'sex offenses.' DISGRACE!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704019808363352069)2016-02-28

[“just another Washington D.C. politician”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704014599708876800)2016-02-28

[“all talk and no action”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704014599708876800)2016-02-28

[“Little”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704001490759725058)2016-02-28

[“poor work ethic!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704001490759725058)2016-02-28

[“the lightweight no show Senator from Florida, just another Washington politician”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704000708236996608)2016-02-28

[“Little”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703974892237135873)2016-02-28

[“set to be the 'puppet' of the special interest Koch brothers”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703974892237135873)2016-02-28

[“little”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703904675289042945)2016-02-28

[“not as smart as Cruz, and may be an even bigger liar”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703691273455034369)2016-02-27

[“once a choker, always a choker!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703257866820415488)2016-02-26

[“Mr. Meltdown”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703257866820415488)2016-02-26

[“looks like a little boy on stage”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703252241487036417)2016-02-26

[“not presidential material!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703252241487036417)2016-02-26

[“Doesn't even show up for votes!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703321647701307392)2016-02-26

[“he is a choker, and once a choker, always a choker!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703257866820415488)2016-02-26

[“Mr. Meltdown”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703257866820415488)2016-02-26

[“looks like a little boy on stage”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703252241487036417)2016-02-26

[“not presidential material”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703252241487036417)2016-02-26

[“Lying”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703251956198875138)2016-02-26

[“very weak on illegal immigration”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/701089616825159680)2016-02-20

[“couldn't even respond properly to President Obama's State of the Union Speech without pouring sweat & chugging water”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/663923439120596993)2015-11-10

[“a highly overrated politician”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/663922928766091264)2015-11-10

[“cannot be President”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/661570281060835328)2015-11-03

[“only won the debate in the minds of desperate people”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/661156823723036672)2015-11-02

[“very disloyal to Jeb”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/660816598333333504)2015-11-01

[“VERY weak on illegal immigration”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/658384857421205504)2015-10-25

[“perfect little puppet”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/653884577300267008)2015-10-13

[“very disloyal”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/650269472058679296)2015-10-03

[“never made ten cents”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/649237053121687552)2015-09-30

[“totally controlled”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/649237053121687552)2015-09-30

[“worst voting record in Senate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/649197084596432897)2015-09-30

[“lazy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/649197084596432897)2015-09-30

[“very weak on stopping illegal immigration”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647760665277530112)2015-09-26

[“knows nothing about finance”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647758419978534912)2015-09-26

[“incapable of making great trade deals”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647758419978534912)2015-09-26

[“rarely there to vote on a bill”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647490626406191104)2015-09-25

[“worst attendance record in Senate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647490626406191104)2015-09-25

[“will allow anyone into the country”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647490499423674368)2015-09-25

[“truly doesn't have a clue!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647250131365036033)2015-09-25

[“worst voting record in Sen.”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/647250131365036033)2015-09-25

## Senator Elizabeth Warren:

[“Pocahontas”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/757919034755076096)2016-07-26

[“bombed last night!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/757919034755076096)2016-07-26

[“Sad to watch”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/757919034755076096)2016-07-26

[“Pocahontas”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/756801575193042944)2016-07-23

[“wanted V.P. slot so badly but wasn't chosen because she has done nothing in the Senate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/756801575193042944)2016-07-23

[“Goofy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/754652888752910336)2016-07-17

[“a very weak Senator”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/754652888752910336)2016-07-17

[“the least productive Senator in the U.S. Senate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/754530019200884737)2016-07-17

[“one of the least productive senators”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/747415955400196096)2016-06-27

[“Very racist!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/741774067368402945)2016-06-11

[“one of the least productive U.S. Senators”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/741240449906663424)2016-06-10

[“has a nasty mouth”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/741240449906663424)2016-06-10

[“All talk, no action!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/735448311914602496)2016-05-25

[“Total hypocrite!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/735444721716199424)2016-05-25

[“lowlife!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/735344013499326465)2016-05-25

[“If it were up to goofy Elizabeth Warren, we’d have no jobs in America”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730504511291265024)2016-05-11

[“she doesn’t have a clue”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730504511291265024)2016-05-11

[“failed Senator”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730498173492445184)2016-05-11

[“gets nothing done”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730498173492445184)2016-05-11

[“lied”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730493295550468096)2016-05-11

[“Our Native American Senator”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730488544700010496)2016-05-11

[“goofy couldn’t care less about the American worker”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730488544700010496)2016-05-11

[“does nothing to help!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730488544700010496)2016-05-11

[“using the woman’s card”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730482068753424385)2016-05-11

[“didn’t have the guts to run for POTUS”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730477118786801669)2016-05-11

[“phony Native American heritage”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730477118786801669)2016-05-11

[“one of the least effective Senators in the entire U.S. Senate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730401662574182405)2016-05-11

[“has done nothing!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/730401662574182405)2016-05-11

[“weak and ineffective”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728777599560892416)2016-05-07

[“Does nothing”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728777599560892416)2016-05-07

[“All talk, no action -- maybe her Native American name?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728777599560892416)2016-05-07

[“Hillary Clinton’s flunky”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728725179074023425)2016-05-06

[“has a career that is totally based on a lie”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728725179074023425)2016-05-06

[“a fraud!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/728725098409164801)2016-05-06

## Senator Jeff Flake: United States senator

[“Really sad”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/774637168769830912)2016-09-10

[“a very weak and ineffective Senator”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/772571293438840832)2016-09-04

[“Sad!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/772571293438840832)2016-09-04

[“weak”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/772556213313765377)2016-09-04

## Senator John McCain: United States senator

[“very foul mouthed”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/785885793340448769)2016-10-11

[“begged for my support during his primary (I gave, he won)”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/785885793340448769)2016-10-11

[“has done nothing”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622713036122554368)2015-07-19

[“I am no fan”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622545987219910656)2015-07-18

[“All he does is go on television is talk, talk, talk”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622469784278564864)2015-07-18

[“incapable of doing anything.”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622469784278564864)2015-07-18

[“has failed miserably”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622469714502094848)2015-07-18

[“doing a lousy job in taking care of our Vets”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622465668978491392)2015-07-18

[“let us down”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622465668978491392)2015-07-18

[“dummy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621781334592241665)2015-07-16

[“graduated last in his class”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621781334592241665)2015-07-16

[“should be defeated in the primaries”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621781334592241665)2015-07-16

## Representative Paul Ryan: House Speaker

[“does zilch!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/787779039079624704)2016-10-16

[“doesn't know how to win”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/787758668565581824)2016-10-16

[“always fighting the Republican nominee!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/787756849453989889)2016-10-16

[“very weak”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/785828772423561216)2016-10-11

[“ineffective”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/785828772423561216)2016-10-11

## Senator Ben Sasse: United States senator

[“Really sad”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/774637168769830912)2016-09-10

[“looks more like a gym rat than a U.S. Senator”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693241143744696320)2016-01-30

[“how the hell did he ever get elected?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693241143744696320)2016-01-30

[“totally ineffective”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/693239943519453184)2016-01-30

## Ben Carson: Retired neurosurgeon

[“incapable of understanding foreign policy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667328359005859840)2015-11-19

[“very weak on illegal immigration”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664885790061813760)2015-11-12

[“many lies by Ben Carson”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/662672380561661952)2015-11-06

[“Pyramids built for grain storage - don't people get it?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/662632599962173440)2015-11-06

[“VERY weak on illegal immigration”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/658384857421205504)2015-10-25

[“has never created a job in his life (well, maybe a nurse)”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/658246911753920512)2015-10-25

## Rick Perry Former Texas governor

[“did an absolutely horrible job of securing the border”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/623500394686251008)2015-07-21

[“should be ashamed of himself”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/623500394686251008)2015-07-21

[“failed on the border”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621783757532626944)2015-07-16

[“should be forced to take an IQ test”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621783757532626944)2015-07-16

[“doesn't understand what the word demagoguery means”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621783444083884037)2015-07-16

[“needs a new pair of glasses”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/617705622251917312)

## Nikki Haley South Carolina governor

[“The people of South Carolina are embarrassed by Nikki Haley!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704751393991737345)

## Mitt Romney:

[“Really sad”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/774637168769830912)2016-09-10

[“choked like a dog”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/741590381503086592)2016-06-11

[“a mixed up man who doesn't have a clue. No wonder he lost!”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710928141112332288)2016-03-18

[“Failed”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710924053981188096)2016-03-18

[“Failed presidential candidate”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/710923287430357001)2016-03-18

[“let us all down in the last presidential race”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709703632292331522)2016-03-15

[“a total joke, and everyone knows it!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/706176828843663360)2016-03-05

[“Why did Mitt Romney BEG me for my endorsement four years ago?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705362027901009921)2016-03-03

[“doesn't know how to win”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705358901349388289)2016-03-03

[“desperate move by the man who should have easily beaten Barrack Obama”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705174403164860416)2016-03-02

[“Failed Presidential Candidate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/705174362530430976)2016-03-02

[“didn't show his tax return until SEPTEMBER 21, 2012, and then only after being humiliated by Harry R”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704000092840325120)2016-02-28

[“bad messenger for estab!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/704000092840325120)2016-02-28

[“failed”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/703092155577831424)2016-02-26

[“one of the dumbest and worst candidates in the history of Republican politics”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702833969537142788)2016-02-25

[“so awkward and goofy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702635699594469377)2016-02-24

[“I don't need his angry advice”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/655765326672601089)2015-10-18

[“blew an election that should have never been lost”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/655763815976583168)2015-10-18

[“terrible 'choke' loss to Obama”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/655761844011954176)2015-10-18

[“why would anybody listen to @MittRomney?”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/622507858714841088)2015-07-18

## Karl Rove: Former deputy White House chief of staff

[“a failed Jeb Bushy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/726865339947073536)2016-05-01

[“Never says anything good & never will”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/726865339947073536)2016-05-01

[“Shouldn't be on the air!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/726865339947073536)2016-05-01

[“should be fired!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702560558269202433)2016-02-24

[“sick”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/702525836948336641)2016-02-24

[“loser”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/689458393283563524)2016-01-19

[“so biased”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/679691783467610113)2015-12-23

[“still thinks Romney won”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/679691783467610113)2015-12-23

[“unfair”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/679691783467610113)2015-12-23

[“dummy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/676812123322781696)2015-12-15

[“no credibility”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/676076928382722048)2015-12-13

[“FoxNews should can him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/676076928382722048)2015-12-13

[“dopey”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675910224855855104)2015-12-13

[“pushing Republicans down the same old path of defeat”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675910224855855104)2015-12-13

[“a loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675910224855855104)2015-12-13

[“shouldn't be allowed to do [his] bias commentary”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675432232492916736)2015-12-11

[“establishment flunky”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675011172496723968)2015-12-10

[“dummy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675010496723083265)2015-12-10

[“should get a life”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/675010496723083265)2015-12-10

[“just totally bombed”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669510996504010752)2015-11-25

[“a loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669510996504010752)2015-11-25

[“has ZERO credibility”](http://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669501105630498816)2015-11-25

[“an establishment dope”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669498673378811905)2015-11-25

[“has made so many mistakes”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669498673378811905)2015-11-25

[“loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/669244676176760833)2015-11-24

[“total fool”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664882878296276993)2015-11-12

[“an all talk, no action dummy!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664882878296276993)2015-11-12

[“part of the Republican Establishment problem”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664882878296276993)2015-11-12

[“purposely mischaracterized my statement”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664850952319553536)2015-11-12

[“moron”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/664820082325893121)2015-11-12

[“easy to beat!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/641305884463861761)2015-09-08

[“spent $430 million and lost ALL races”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/638876473668014080)2015-09-02

[“dope”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/638876473668014080)2015-09-02

[“wasted $400 million”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621696429749325825)2015-07-16

[“didn't win one race”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621696429749325825)2015-07-16

[“total loser”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621696429749325825)2015-07-16

[“a clown with zero credibility”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621696302800371712)2015-07-16

[“irrelevant clown, sweats and shakes nervously”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621622877092249601)2015-07-16

[“has zero cred”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621622877092249601)2015-07-16

[“made fool of himself in '12”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621622877092249601)2015-07-16

[“a bush plant who called all races wrong”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621333869422346240)2015-07-15

[“clown”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/621333806511955968)2015-07-15

## On Ohio Governor John Kasich:

[“Typical politician”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724633058398375936)2016-04-25

[“can't make a deal work”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724633058398375936)2016-04-25

[“mathematically dead and totally desperate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724445148910915584)2016-04-25

[“will drop like a rock in the polls”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/724052308661772288)2016-04-24

[“only looks O.K. in polls against Hillary because nobody views him as a threat and therefore have placed ZERO negative ads against him”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/722017428520243201)2016-04-18

[“bought and paid for by lobbyists!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/709690378778230785)2016-03-15

[“Absentee Governor”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/708647560399949825)2016-03-12

[“good for Mexico!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/708647560399949825)2016-03-12

[“poor”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/673917220121112576)2015-12-07

[“doesn't have what it takes”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/673917220121112576)2015-12-07

[“can't debate”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/668914875557629953)2015-11-23

[“dummy”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/668914875557629953)2015-11-23

[“one of the worst presidential candidates in history”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/668914875557629953)2015-11-23

[“so easy to beat!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/668090367284281344)2015-11-21

[“total failure”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667521691015319552)2015-11-20

[“total dud”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667519608505659392)2015-11-20

[“fell right into President Obama's trap on ObamaCare”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509409120043008)2015-11-20

[“almost last”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509367881641984)2015-11-20

[“he came in dead last”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509279507615748)2015-11-20

[“I will sue him just for fun!”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509177707659264)2015-11-20

[“so irrelevant to the race”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509134514786308)2015-11-20

[“pathetic”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667509055867346944)2015-11-20

[“failed image”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667508977521917952)2015-11-20

[“failed campaign & debating skills”](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/667508888074190848)2015-11-20

# More on Trump Twitter

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Dec 7](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/806660011904614408)

Chuck Jones, who is President of United Steelworkers 1999, has done a terrible job representing workers. No wonder companies flee country!

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Dec 6](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/806134244384899072)

Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control, more than $4 billion. Cancel order!

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Nov 29](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/803567993036754944)

Nobody should be allowed to burn the American flag - if they do, there must be consequences - perhaps loss of citizenship or year in jail!

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Nov 28](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/803237535178772481)

If Cuba is unwilling to make a better deal for the Cuban people, the Cuban/American people and the U.S. as a whole, I will terminate deal.

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Nov 27](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/802972944532209664)

In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally

[Donald J. Trump ‏@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) [Nov 10](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/796900183955095552)

Just had a very open and successful presidential election. Now professional protesters, incited by the media, are protesting. Very unfair!

# Trump Foreign Policy Acts Before Taking Office

Trump is not careful about who he contacts and what he says on tweets. What he began saying was often counter to current policy. With Trump it seems to only come down to the “deal” he can make or who was the last person he talked to or what to hear on Fox news.

Here are a few examples:

## China:

Trump held a telephone conversation with Taiwan’s president Tsai Ing-wen. It appears that he already undermined the traditional U.S. one China approach to the division between Taiwan and China. It appears that he was trying to put China on the defensive.

## Philippines:

Trump spoke with Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines in which he invited Duterte to visit the US. Duterte’s government crackdown on drugs has caused more than 2,000 deaths and several hundred surrenders by users and traffickers. Obama had criticized Duterte for his suppression of civil liberties and vigilante approach to justice. There appears to be a conflict of interest between Trump’s investments in the Philippines and American policy.

## Turkey:

Trump has business interests in Turkey, and conveyed compliments through a “close friend” of his to Turkey’s leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

## Britain:

Trump suggested that Britain should name the anti-immigrant leader Nigel Farage its ambassador to Washington.

## Israel:

Trump spoke harshly against Obama not vetoing a UN resolution condemning Israel for continuing to build Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian land. Of course, Netanyahu went ballistic and then Trump supported him. Trump is expected to resume giving Israel military aid with any conditions. His nominee as ambassador to Israel is a strong supporter of the settlements as well as moving the capitol to Jerusalem.

## Japan:

Trump met Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in New York shortly after his election. He did not consult with anyone in the State Department and took his daughter Ivanka to the meeting. Trump has suggested that Japan should build up its defense capabilities perhaps with nuclear weapons., only one other American was in the room: his daughter Ivanka. Trump apparently did not consult with the State Department for talking points. For all we know, Trump may have reiterated his position that Japan should do more in its own defense, including developing nuclear weapons.

## Pakistan:

Trump made a phone call to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The U.S. currently has less than great relations with the Pakistan government due to Pakistan’s relations with India and its nuclear weapon program.

## Kazakhstan:

He called President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev has ruled Kazakhstan since 1989. He won his fifth election in April 2015 with about 97 percent of the vote.

## Russia:

Trump appears to consider Vladimir Putin an ally. Rumors are still strong that Russion helped Trump win the American election. Trump and his future secretary of state, Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, have large business interests in Russia.

In short, Trump is **trying to make American policy while still a private citizen. He is doing so without guidance from the State Department or the CIA.**

# Donald Trump Plans and Promises

**Donald Trump Plans and Promises**

Sources: Breitbart, Pokitifact, and Washington Post

Most central to Trump's promises are to build a wall on the U.S. border and make Mexico pays for it, cancel payments to the UN for climate change programs, ban Muslims from entering the country, deport all illegal immigrants, bring manufacturing jobs back, impose tariffs on goods imported from China and Mexico, either rewrite or end the North American Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, reintroduce torture methods, repeal Opamacare, create a market-based health system, change the Iran nuclear agreement, not cut social security, reduce taxes, and bomb and take the oil from ISIS.

**Promises and Plans**

## Immigration

1. Build a wall along the southern border that's taller than the arenas where Trump held his rallies, taller than any ladder and one foot taller than the Great Wall of China. This "artistically beautiful" wall will be constructed out of hardened concrete, rebar and steel, and it will be "the greatest wall that you've ever seen" -- so great that the nation will likely one day name it "The Trump Wall."
2. Temporarily ban most foreign Muslims from entering the United States "until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." Trump would allow exceptions for dignitaries, business people, athletes and others who have "proven" themselves.
3. 'total and complete' shutdown of Muslims entering U.S.
4. Bar Syrian refugees from entering the country and kick out any who are already living here. Wealthy Persian Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia should pay to set up a heavily guarded "safe zone" in Syria.
5. On the first day in office, terminate President Obama's executive orders related to immigration. This includes getting rid of "sanctuary cities" that Trump says have become refuges for criminals.
6. Deport the almost 11 million immigrants illegally living in the United States.
7. Triple the number of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers.
8. Continue to allow lowly paid foreign workers to come to the United States on temporary works visas because Trump says they are the only ones who want to pick grapes.

## Health Care

1. Get rid of Obamacare and replace it with something "terrific" that is "so much better, so much better, so much better."
2. Fully repeal Obamacare and replace it with Health Savings Accounts, the ability to purchase health insurance across state lines, and lets states manage Medicaid funds.
3. Reforms will also include cutting the red tape at the FDA
4. Knock down the regulatory walls between states for health insurance, making plans available nationally instead of regionally.
5. Save Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security without cutting benefits.
6. Defund Planned Parenthood.
7. Make medical marijuana widely available to patients, and allow states to decide if they want to fully legalize pot or not.
8. Provide more funding for drug treatment, especially for heroin addicts.

## Environment

1. The Environmental Protection Agency might also disappear.
2. Lift the restrictions on the production of $50 trillion dollars' worth of job-producing American energy reserves, including shale, oil, natural gas and clean coal.
3. Lift the Obama-Clinton roadblocks and allow vital energy infrastructure projects, like the Keystone Pipeline, to move forward.
4. Cancel billions in payments to U.N. climate change programs and use the money to fix America's water and environmental infrastructure.
5. Work with Congress on an End The Offshoring Act

## Education

1. Get rid of Common Core because it's "a disaster" and a "very bad thing." Trump says he wants to give local school districts more control and might even eliminate the Department of Education.
2. Work with Congress on a School Choice And Education Opportunity Act
3. Redirects education dollars to gives parents the right to send their kid to the public, private, charter, magnet, religious or home school of their choice.
4. Expand vocational and technical education, and make 2 and 4-year college more affordable.

## Civil Liberties

1. Heavily surveil mosques in the United States. Trump has said he's open to the idea of closing some mosques.
2. Create a database of Syrian refugees. Trump hasn't ruled out creating a database of Muslims in the country.
3. Pick Supreme Court justices who are "really great legal scholars."
4. Impose a minimum sentence of five years in federal prison for any violent felon who commits a crime using a gun, with no chance for parole or early release.
5. Sign an executive order calling for the death penalty for anyone found guilty of killing a police officer.
6. Provide more funding for police training.
7. End birthright citizenship

## Government

1. Propose a Constitutional Amendment to impose term limits on all members of Congress.
2. Institute a hiring freeze on all federal employees to reduce federal workforce through attrition (exempting military, public safety, and public health)
3. Require for every new federal regulation, two existing regulations must be eliminated.
4. Institute a five year-ban on White House and Congressional officials becoming lobbyists after they leave government service
5. Create a lifetime ban on White House officials lobbying on behalf of a foreign government.
6. Institute a complete ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections.
7. Cancel every unconstitutional executive action, memorandum and order issued by President Obama.
8. Cancel all federal funding to Sanctuary Cities.
9. Establishes tariffs to discourage companies from laying off their workers in order to relocate in other countries and ship their products back to the U.S. tax-free.

## International Affairs

1. Make Mexico pay for the wall. If Mexico refuses, then the United States will impound all remittance payments taken from the wages of illegal immigrants, cut foreign aid, institute tariffs, cancel visas for Mexican business leaders and diplomats, and increase fees for visas, border-crossing cards and port use.
2. Strengthen the military so that it's "so big and so strong and so great" that "nobody's going to mess with us.
3. Allow Russia to deal with the Islamic State in Syria and/or work with Russian President Vladimir Putin to wipe out shared enemies.
4. "Bomb the s--- out of ISIS." Also bomb oil fields controlled by the Islamic State, then seize the oil and give the profits to military veterans who were wounded while fighting.
5. Target and kill the relatives of terrorists.
6. Shut down parts of the Internet so that Islamic State terrorists cannot use it to recruit American children.
7. Bring back waterboarding, which the Obama administration considers torture. Trump has said he's willing to use interrogation techniques that go even further than waterboarding. Even if such tactics don't work, "they deserve it anyway, for what they're doing."
8. Leave troops in Afghanistan because it's such "a mess." Protect Israel. And increase U.S. military presence in the East and South China Seas.
9. Find an "out" clause in the Iran deal and then "totally" renegotiate the whole thing.
10. Negotiate the release of all U.S. prisoners held in Iran before taking office. (Five hostages were recently released, including Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian; Trump has taken some credit for this.)
11. Aggressively challenge China's power in the world by declaring the country a currency manipulator, adopting a "zero tolerance policy on intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer" and cracking down on China's "lax labor and environmental standards."
12. Replace "free trade" with "fair trade." Gather together the "smartest negotiators in the world," assign them each a country and renegotiate all foreign trade deals.
13. Put billionaire hedge fund manager Carl Icahn in charge of trade negotiations with China and Japan, and pick an ambassador to Japan who is "a killer," unlike the current ambassador, Caroline Kennedy.
14. Announce intention to renegotiate NAFTA or withdraw from the deal under Article 2205
15. Announce withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
16. Direct the Secretary of Commerce and U.S. Trade Representative to identify all foreign trading abuses that unfairly impact American workers and direct them to use every tool under American and international law to end those abuses immediately.

## Veteran Affairs

1. Fire "the corrupt and incompetent" leaders of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and dramatically reform the agency. Allow veterans to take their military identification card to any medical facility that accepts Medicaid patients to receive care. Embed satellite VA clinics in rural hospitals and underserved areas, and ensure than every VA hospital is permanently staffed with OBGYN doctors.
2. Invest more heavily in programs that help military veterans transition back to civilian life, including job training and placement services. Also increase funding for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries and mental health issues. Veterans who apply for a job at a VA facility will have five points added to their qualifying scores.

## Economy

1. Bring back jobs from China -- and Mexico, Japan and elsewhere.
2. "I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created." Trump says cities like Reno, Nev., will "be a big fat beautiful beneficiary" of these new jobs.
3. Tell Ford Motor Co.'s president that unless he cancels plans to build a massive plant in Mexico, the company will face a 35 percent tax on cars imported back into the United States. Trump is confident he can get this done before taking office. (Last year he incorrectly said this had already happened.)
4. Force Nabisco to once again make Oreos in the United States. And bully Apple into making its "damn computers" and other products here.
5. Impose new taxes on many imports into the country. Numbers thrown around have included 32 percent, 34 percent and 35 percent.
6. Grow the nation's economy by at least 6 percent.
7. Reduce the $18 trillion national debt by "vigorously eliminating waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government, ending redundant government programs and growing the economy to increase tax revenues."
8. Cut the budget by 20 percent by simply renegotiating.
9. Get rid of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.
10. Simplify the U.S. tax code and reduce the number of tax brackets from seven to four. The highest earners would pay a 25-percent tax. The corporate tax rate would fall to 15 percent. Eliminate the "marriage penalty" for taxpayers and get rid of the alternate minimum tax.
11. No longer charge income tax to single individuals earning less than $25,000 per year or couples earning less than $50,000. These people will, however, be required to file a one-page form with the Internal Revenue Service that states: "I win."
12. Allow corporations a one-time window to transfer money being held overseas, charging a much-reduced 10 percent tax.
13. Get rid of most corporate tax loopholes or incentives, but continue to allow taxpayers to deduct mortgage interest and charitable donations from their taxes.
14. Allow Americans to deduct childcare and elder care from their taxes, incentivize employers to provide on-side childcare services, and creates tax-free Dependent Care Savings Accounts for both young and elderly dependents, with matching contributions for low-income families.
15. Enact new ethics reforms to Drain the Swamp and reduce the corrupting influence of special interests on our politics.

## Guns

1. On his first day in office, Trump would get rid of gun-free zones at military bases and in schools
2. Use "common sense" to fix the mental health system and prevent mass shootings. Find ways to arm more of the "good guys" like him who can take out the "sickos." Get rid of bans on certain types of guns and magazines so that "good, honest people" can own the guns of their choice.
3. Fix the background check system used when purchasing guns to ensure states are properly uploading criminal and health records.
4. Allow concealed-carry permits to be recognized in all 50 states.

## Infrastructure

1. Rebuild the country's aging infrastructure -- especially bridges and airports that look like they belong in a third-world country -- for one-third of what the United States is currently paying for such projects.
2. Stop spending money on space exploration until the United States can fix its potholes. Encourage private space-exploration companies to expand

# God, I love this Country

Graydon Carter wrote in Vanity Fair **how proud we should be to be Americans**. He summarized where we were on election day 2016:

Vanity Fair

December, 2016

By Graydon Carter

From 9/11 to 11/9

God, I love this country.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a **serial bankrupt** pass himself off as a successful businessman. (And none of those he bankrupted were even regular businesses. They were casinos- where people essentially come to lose their money.)

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man **who offended** Hispanics, Muslims, Jews and African-Americans, as well as women, babies and the handicapped, become the Republican nominee for president.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man for whom **truth is an inconvenient concept** feel comfortable referring to his opponents as “lying” and “crooked.”

ONLY IN AMERICA, a nation built on a history of immigration, could a man who married two immigrants – one of whom is alleged to have worked illegally when she first arrived – run on an anti-immigration platform.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man with a legendary reputation for **stiffing small-business owner and wage laborers** be able to pass himself off as a champion of the little guy.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man run for the presidency with one of his heralded accomplishments being fixing the skating rink in New York’s Central Park, a job the city had bungled for years. (It’s a feat most backyard rink rats in Canada pull off before their 13th Birthday.)

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man **who brags about groping and kissing women** without their consent win 53 percent of the vote among white woman.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who avoided the draft – with a deferment for pesky bone spurs on his feet, which somehow did not hinder him from playing tennis – and **who insulted war heroes** and their families become the commander on chief of the greatest military power on earth.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who lashed out over the flimsiest of slights become our chief negotiator with the Russians, the Chinese and the North Koreans.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man whose staff reportedly took away his Twitter account because he couldn’t control himself be given the nuclear codes. (Thanks you President Obama for pointing out this one.)

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man with a negligible record of charitable giving and not a single day’s experience in public life be raised to the highest office in the land.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who kept a volume of Hitler’s speeches by his bedside rule over the second-largest Jewish population in the world.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man whose resume of **failed businesses and alleged sexual harassment** is so miserable that he would have trouble finding work at a copy shop be named chief executive of the world’s largest economy.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who has **skirted the law** for more than four decades be put in charge of choosing new justices for the nation’s highest court.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man whose foreign-affairs experience consists of negotiating deals for hotels and golf courses – and perhaps arranging for investments by Russians – become the most powerful man on the planet. (And at a perilous time.)

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who has likely paid no federal taxes for nearly two decades, and who refused to release his tax returns, be put in charge of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who **thinks climate change is a hoax** and something invented by the Chinese, be put in charge of not only the Environmental Protection Agency but also our negotiations with other nations – at the most calamitous environmental period in the earth’s modern history.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who surrounded himself with political second-raters like Rudolph Giuliani and Chris Christie be put in charge of forming a team to run the next U.S. government.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who earned the contempt of his Republican rivals for being a **con man and a fraud** – and who implicated the father of one of his rivals in John F. Kennedy’s assassination – ultimately reap the support of those very same rivals.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who threatened to throw his opponent in jail and to sue the women who have accused him of sexual harassment, who denigrated the judge who will preside over the trial of his bogus university (because the judge is of Mexican heritage), and who has 75 outstanding law suits (including two for fraud) be put in charge of the Justice department.

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man who **does not understand the separation of powers** and who has advocated for the use of torture regardless of national and international law, be thought prepared to swear an oath to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

ONLY IN AMERICA could a man whose primary national exposure was appearing on a reality-TV show become the reality that so much of the world feared.

**Don’t tell me American is no longer a land of opportunity.**

# Observation on week before inauguration

This is from Paul Slansky via Facebook

"One week away from inaugurating an illegitimate president, here's this week's news roundup. Experts in authoritarianism advise us to keep a list of things subtly changing around us, so we'll remember.

Here's my list for week 9:

1. The Office of Government Ethics director publicly lamented, "we seem to have lost contact with the Trump-Pence transition since the election."

2.Three vendors have placed liens on the Trump hotel in DC for unpaid bills of over $5 million, in total.

3. The OGE similarly said they had not completed ethics reviews of Trump's cabinet nominees. Leader McConnell said the Democrats need to "grow up" on Trump's desire for speedy confirmations.

4. Sean Hannity endorsed a tweet which said "Make Russia Great Again" with the word, "Amen." Hannity later deleted his tweet.

5. Meryl Streep used her Golden Globes lifetime of notable work speech to eloquently attack Trump, without mentioning his name.

6. Trump responded via a tweet that Streep is an "over-rated" actress, and denied he had mocked a disabled reporter.

7. Trump took credit for a Fiat Chrysler plant and jobs in MI and OH. Fiat Chrysler responded that Trump had nothing to do with it.

8. Trump appointed Jared Kushner, his son-in-law, to a top WH post, possibly violating the 1967 federal anti-nepotism statute.

9. Trump told the NYT that all the dress shops in DC are sold out for his inauguration. This was a lie.

10. Trump team dismissed the National Nuclear Security Administration and his deputy, responsible for maintaining our nuclear arsenal, as of January 20. Trump also dismissed the commanding general of the DC national guard.

11. Cory Booker became the first US Senator to speak out against a fellow sitting senator at a confirmation hearing (Sessions for AG).

12. CNN reported a bombshell - Intelligence chiefs had briefed Trump that Russia had gathered information to blackmail him (the dossier).

13. Same day, BuzzFeed published contents of the dossier, which apparently had been in the hands of the FBI and some in the media since the summer. Contents included the infamous golden shower.

14. Trump denied having been briefed, and said the contents of the dossier were confirmed by intelligence to be fake. DNI Clapper issued a public statement indicating the dossier's contents are still being verified (not fake), and media reported that Comey met with Trump one-on-one to review the dossier the prior Friday.

15. Trump held his first press conference since July. Trump packed the room with paid employees, who applauded him, and jeered at reporters.

16. At presser, Trump said he had no plans to release his tax returns, or resolve conflicts of interest, saying, "I have no-conflict situation because I'm president."

17. Trump bullied reporters at two news outlets, calling them "fake news," and using other news outlets as evidence.

18. The director of the Office of Government Ethics publicly blasted Trump's non-plan for dealing with **conflicts of interest**. Next day, Rep Jason Chaffetz threatened to investigate the OGE.

19. Next day, while meeting with CEO of AT&T at Trump Tower (AT&T needs approval for their merger with Time Warner, parent company of CNN) Trump tweeted CNN is "FAKE NEWS" and tanking.

20. Rep Barbara Lee said she would not attend Trump's inauguration. During the week, the list grew to 6 members of Congress.

21. Trump encouraged his followers in a tweet to "buy L.L. Bean," in violation of a WH policy prohibiting the endorsement of products.

22. The Justice Department inspector general opened an investigation into allegations of misconduct by the FBI and Comey, leading up to the election.

23. C-Span's online broadcast was interrupted by Kremlin-backed broadcaster RT, while Rep Maxine Waters was speaking. Waters has said she will not meet with Trump. The broadcast was also interrupted that morning when a Senator discussed Russian hacking.

24. WAPO reported that Michael Flynn, Trump's NSA, spoke to Russia's envoy on Dec 29th, the day Obama announced sanctions on Russia. Trump team initially denied this, then later, said they spoke only once that day. Reuters reports they spoke 5 times that day.

25. Trump continued to deny Russian hacking, and to use quotes around Intelligence in his tweets.

26. Trump appointed Rudy Giuliani to a cybersecurity role - albeit though a private company.

27. Trump appointed a **sixth Goldman Sachs** (past or present) employees to a major role in his administration.

28. After Congress was briefed by Intelligence chiefs, Rep John Lewis said, "I don't see Trump as a legitimate president."

29. Next morning, Trump tweeted a disparaging attack on Lewis, on MLK weekend, saying he was all talk.

30. Democrats in Congress were furious with FBI director Comey's unwillingness to answer their questions and fully brief them.

31. UK media broke that the former agent who gathered the info in the dossier, had shared his findings with the FBI, starting in the summer, and had become concerned that a cabal within the FBI was compromised and attempting to cover-up information.

32. The Senate announced hearings on possible Russia-Trump ties, and said subpoenas would be used if necessary.

33. The FEC sent Trump a letter listing 247 pages of illegal contributions to his campaign.

34. In the wake of the Trump dossier becoming public, Russia's cybersecurity head is out of a job.

35. Human Rights Watch issued it's annual report of threats to human rights around the world. For the first time in 27 years, the **US is listed as a top threat** because of the rise of Trump.

36. A Quinnipiac poll showed Trump's favorability ratings continuing to slide to historic lows for modern day presidents: only 37% of Americans view Trump favorably.

# Ariel Dorfman Compares Trump to Buchanan

On the day before the Trump became President, Ariel Dorfman wrote an op-ed piece for the Los Angeles Times. Dorfman is a Cuban-American writer who for many years lived in exile from Cuba. He most recently served as a professor at Duke University.

*Words of encouragement for Donald J. Trump from James Buchanan, 15th president of the United States*

*By Ariel Dorfman*

*Sir: How long have I waited for your advent, prayed for someone like you to come along? All these years, since my death in 1868, I have watched each election cycle, hoping that finally my savior would appear, a man — heaven forbid it should be a woman! — who would rescue me from* ***my status as the worst president*** *in the annals of the United States.*

*Limited as your knowledge of our past may be, surely you are aware that I have been blamed for the secession of the Southern states in 1861, just as my term was ending. Unfairly faulted for the Civil War that ensued, I am now relieved to know that the presidency will soon be in the hands of someone who will, I am certain, go down in history as a leader who* ***most bitterly divided the nation and wreaked havoc with the foundations of our democracy****.*

*I am excited, indeed, about your chances of outshining me. If you persist in your campaign to drill, extract and pollute, if you enable the climate deniers and help to overheat our spacious skies, you will have led us, not to the brink of a conflagration that killed a mere million, but to a more substantial achievement of worldwide significance:* ***taking the whole of humanity to the brink of extinction****. That is a record that will considerably exceed my own lapses and make me seem a paragon of wisdom to future citizens (at least, those who survive).*

*As to the peoples’ daily lives, you are likely to far surpass the harm I have wrought there as well. Many families cursed my name as they received news of their maimed or dead kin, but many more will curse yours when their well-being deteriorates as you assault the country’s healthcare system.*

*Regarding corruption, I am also hopeful you will outstrip me. My offenses (accused of bribery, extortion and abuse of power by a congressional committee) will be deemed petty compared to those that loom for you, guaranteeing an administration rife, at all levels, with sleaze and conflicts of interest. But do not tarry over your manifest financial or ethical dilemmas.* ***I managed to avoid impeachment and so will you****, given your proven ability to convince your supporters that* ***facts do not matter****. Would that such talents had been bestowed upon me, and oh that television and social media had been invented in my day. I could have blamed Mexico for our Civil War.*

*Could you address two other matters? The first is abortion. It was during my presidency, in 1859, that the American Medical Assn. urged the criminalization of women who terminated their pregnancies, and you have the chance to revert our laws and customs to that pristine moment when the gentle sex recognized that their bodies belonged to their menfolk. And then Cuba. I tried in vain to buy that island from Spain and then favored invading it. You can complete my dream. Extend the reach of our empire into the Caribbean and beyond, intervene vigorously in the affairs of enemy and allied nations. Pay special attention to China, where I made the mistake of being only marginally involved in the Second Opium War. I am sure you will do better when you engage the Chinese in the First Asian Trade War.*

*I am not alone in urging you to stubbornly follow your instincts. Other deceased presidents also entertain high expectations for your reign.* ***Richard Nixon*** *wishes that your slurs and insults would make people forget his own foul language, and he eagerly anticipates manifold Trumpgates that will make Watergate seem small potatoes.* ***Warren G. Harding*** *is certain that your outrages will go far beyond the Teapot Dome scandal, which fraudulently favored the oil companies. And* ***Herbert Hoover****, reviled for ignoring the oncoming Great Depression, is confident you will be even more obtuse, and when you precipitate a worse economic catastrophe his actions will thus appear less disastrous. He expects you will also best him in* ***union-busting and the massive deportation of immigrants****.*

*Presidents who occupy the top tier of favorite leaders, including several Founding Fathers, have reproached me for appealing to what they call the worst angels of your nature. They are preparing a collective message counseling moderation and praying that you are not further deranged by the power of your high office.*

***Franklin Roosevelt*** *believes that informing you that he regrets the internment of Americans of Japanese origin will discourage you from a roundup of Muslim Americans.* ***Harry Truman****, haunted by the ghosts of Hiroshima, would press you to abolish nuclear weapons instead of starting a devastating arms race.* ***Dwight Eisenhower*** *intends to reiterate his warning against the military-industrial complex — so naïve, our Ike, unable to realize that representatives of those powers are about to be blatantly ensconced in your Cabinet. And* ***Mr. Lincoln****, whose party you have terribly transmogrified, trusts that if he were to whisper daily guidance in your ear, the Republic might, once more, be saved.*

*I have no doubt that you will not heed him or any other meddling altruist.*

*After all, I send these words of encouragement inspired by your own example. You have taught me that it is better to bolster one’s image in the Presidential Celebrity Sweepstakes than to sacrifice oneself for the good of the country.*

*And so, farewell, until the moment you join the former presidents on the other side of death, when I will be delighted to steer you to the very bottom of the heap, where I have languished for a century and a half. What a pleasure finally to be able to look down upon someone who has done damage to the United States in ways unimaginable to me in my most desolate dreams.*

*With my sincere thanks for all your efforts to rescue me from the nethermost abyss and from the title worst of the worst, I am, sir, your humble servant,*

*James Buchanan*

*Ariel Dorfman’s latest book is the memoir “Feeding on Dreams.” He and his wife divide their time between Chile and North Carolina, where he is emeritus professor of literature at Duke University.*

*Los Angeles Times, January 19, 2017*

# Inauguration Day

President Donald Trump, just after being sworn in a president, signed an executive order giving the Department of Health and Human Resources the ability "**to waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay" any provision of the law that would "impose a fiscal burden**." The executive order, which would also apply to other government agencies, the ability to undermine the Affordable Care Act.

David Anderson of Duke predicts that "Carriers will need to model a much sicker and more expensive single, unified risk pool as the non-subsidized portion of the risk pool will death spiral." "If the secretary of HHS determines that paying a dollar is an undue hardship, an exemption can be granted." "Under this executive order, the hardship exemptions will be freely and frequently issued."

As a result, Anderson stated that, "we should expect quite a few healthy people to leave the 2018 risk pool …. That means **the average premium will increase much faster** as the risk pool will be proportionally sicker and more expensive with fewer healthy people to insure the sicker and more expensive individuals." He also noted that subsidies may not increase but since they come out of the federal budget, other cuts to social services may be made by Congress.

# The Day after Inauguration

The **Women’s March on Washington** in the District of Columbia was estimated to exceed 500,000 participants. Other marches were held in most states and around the world. The total estimate for the United States alone exceeded **3 million participants**.

Cities in nearly every state played host to sister marches. The largest demonstrations were held in Chicago, Boston, New York, Denver, Los Angeles and Madison, Wisconsin. There were in excess of 30 marches in Canada as well demonstrations in Berlin, Cape Town, New Delhi, Belfast, London, Oslo, Nairobi, Sydney, Mexico City, Vienna, Paris, Rome, Geneva, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Reykjavik and Stockholm.

In Los Angeles, the march was one of the largest in L.A. history. Estimates ranged from **750,000** to a police estimate of hundreds of thousands.

Some other crowd size estimates:

100,000 in San Francisco, California (CBS)

84,000 in Oakland, California (CBS)

20,000 in Sacramento, California (Sacramento Bee)

70-100,000 in Portland, Oregon (estimates from police and organizers)

130,000 in Seattle, Washington (KING 5 News)

175,000 in Boston, Massachusetts (Boston Globe)

15,000 March in Cleveland

60,000 in Minneapolis / St. Paul

40,000 in San Diego, California (SDPD)

22,000 in the March on Houston

100,000 in Denver (police estimate)

60,000 in Atlanta (police estimate)

40,000 in Austin (police estimate)

30,000 in Santa Ana, California

50,000 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (NBC 10)

13,000 in St. Louis (police estimate)

5-10,000 Augusta, Maine: (estimates from police and organizers)

20,000 in St. Petersburg, Florida (Tampa Bay Times)

300+ in Jackson, New Hampshire (Conway Daily Sun)

9,000 in Lansing, Michigan

4,000 in Detroit, Michigan (Detroit Free Press)

15,000 in Tucson, Arizona: (police estimate)

20,000 in Phoenix Arizona: (The Arizona Republic)

10,000 in New Orleans (New Orleans Advocate)

15,000 in Nashville, Tennessee (Nashville Scene)

1,000 in Monterey, California

7,000 in Colorado Spring, Colorado (The Gazette)

35 in Zebulon, Georgia (SPLC)

1,500 Duluth, Minnesota (organizers' estimate)

17,000 in Raleigh, North Carolina (Raleigh News & Observer)

1,500 in Wilmington, North Carolina (Star News?)

600 in New Bern, North Carolina (Sun Journal)

800 in McMinnville, Oregon

15,000 in Montpelier, Vermont

3,000 in Bend, Oregon

200+ in Ogden, Utah (Standard Examiner)

1,000 in Lafayette, Indiana

15,000 in St. Louis, Missouri

25,000 in Charlotte, North Carolina (Fox46)

5,000 in Providence, Rhode Island

7,800-10,000 in San Luis Obispo, California (KSBY)

11,000 in Ann Arbor, Michigan

2,800 in Charleston, West Virginia (Fox Eyewitness News)

2,000 in Charleston, South Carolina (Live 5 News)

10,000 in Hartford, Connecticut (New Haven Register)

3,300 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota (Argus Leader)

1,000+ in Rapid City, South Dakota (KEVN)

1,600 in Newport, Oregon

1,200 in Carbondale, Illinois

1,000 in Kingston, New York (CKWS)

6-10,000 in Bellingham, Washington

10,000 in Portland, Maine (Portland Press Herald)

1,000 in Newark, Delaware

10,000 in Miami, Florida (Miami Herald)

750-1,000 in Ukiah, California (Ukiah Daily Journal)

6-7,000 in Asheville, North Carolina

6-7,000 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

1,000 in Ketchum, Idaho

5,000 in Lexington, Kentucky

85-100 in Alpine, Texas

3,500 in Laguna Beach, California

1,000 in Langley, Washington

10,000 in Reno, Nevada

4,000 in Las Vegas, Nevada

2,000 in Anchorage, Alaska

6-10,000 in Kansas City, Kansas

6-9,000 in Memphis, Tennessee

5,000 in Spokane, Washington

1,000 in Port Townsend, Washington

7-800 in Murray, Kentucky

30-40,000 in San Jose, California

5,000 in Santa Rosa, California

3-5,000 in Boise, Idaho

10,000 in New Orleans (New Orleans Advocate)

8,000 in Santa Cruz, California

500 in Clemson, South Carolina

5,000 in Stamford, Connecticut (Stamford Advocate)

11,000 in Ann Arbor, Michigan (MLIVE)

7,000 in Park City, Utah (Park Record)

7,000 in Little Rock, Arkansas (Arkansas Matters)

2,500-4,000 in Erie, Pennsylvania (Go Erie.com)

500+ in Idaho Falls, Idaho (Local 8 News)

5,000-10,000 in Birmingham, Alabama (AL.com)

26,000 in Des Moines, Iowa (WHO-TV)

8-10,000 in Seneca Falls, New York (CNY Central)

10,000 in Helena, Montana (Billings Gazette)

12,000 in Omaha, Nebraska (Omaha World Herald)

2,000 in Lincoln, Nebraska (Lincoln Journal Star)

1,200+ in Cheyenne, Wyoming (Wyoming Tribune Eagle)

1,000 in Fargo, North Dakota (Valley News Live)

10,000+ in Sarasota, Florida (Sarasota Herald-Tribune)

25,000 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Action News)

5-7,000 in West Palm Beach, Florida (Palm Beach Post)

3,000 in Roanoke, Virginia (WBDJ7)

22 in Utqiagvik (formerly Barrow), Alaska (ADN.com)

7,000+ in Cincinnati, Ohio (Fox)

5000+ in Santa Rosa, California (Press Democrat)

1,000+ in South Bend, Indiana (South Bend Tribune)

2,000 in Wenatchee, Washington

1,500-2,000 in Hilo, Hawai'i (police estimate)

1,000-2,000 in Flagstaff, Arizona (Arizona Daily Sun)

1,200 in Prescott, Arizona (Daily Courier)

1,100 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (WITF)

3,000 in Traverse City, Michigan (Record-Eagle)

3,000 in Dayton, Ohio (Dayton Daily News)

14,000 in Tallahassee, Florida (Tallahassee, Florida)

100s in Durango, Colorado (Durango Herald)

1,500 in La Cruces, New Mexico (Las Cruces Sun-News)

3,000 in Sonoma, California (Sonoma Index Tribune?) 5,000 in Poughkeepsie, New York (Poughkeepsie Journal?) 5-9,000 in Fort Worth, Texas (Star Telegram)

7,000 in Albany, New York (Times-Union)

150-200 in Vancouver, Washington

3-5,000 in Chattanooga, Tennessee (Times Free Press)

1,600 in Annapolis, Maryland (Capital Gazette)

300 in Tillamook, Oregon (Headlight Herald)

1,000 in Falmouth, Massachusetts (Falmouth Enterprise)

6,000+ in Santa Barbara, California (Santa Barbara Independent)

2,500+ in Naples, Florida (Naples Daily News)

30 in Willow Springs, Missouri

400 in Nantucket, Massachusetts (The Inquirer and Mirror)

300 in Gualala, California

1,000+ in Chico, California (ChicoER News)

1,000 in Woodstock, New York (Daily Freeman)

300 in Redding, California (Record Searchlight)

2,000 in Charlottesville, Virginia

100 in Jerome, Arizona

# Trump and his Orwellian War with the Media

**Outright Lies, Constant Tweets & "Alternative Facts": Inside Trump's Orwellian War with the Media**

JANUARY 24, 2017

Democracy Now

Brian Knappenberger

director of Nobody Speak: Trials of the Free Press.

Mark Hertsgaard

investigative editor at The Nation magazine and author of seven books, including On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency.

We turn now to look at President Trump, the media and what the new administration calls "**alternative facts**." On Saturday, in his first full day in office, Trump visited CIA headquarters. Speaking in front of the CIA Memorial Wall, he told the agency he had a running war with the media. Hours later, Trump then ordered his new press secretary, Sean Spicer, to hold an emergency press briefing to claim, "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe." Then, on Sunday, Trump’s adviser, Kellyanne Conway, defended Spicer’s demonstrably **false statement** by saying he "**gave alternative facts**." We speak to filmmaker Brian Knappenberger, director of "Nobody Speak: Trials of the Free Press," and Mark Hertsgaard, investigative editor at The Nation magazine and author of seven books, including "On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency."

AMY GOODMAN: We turn to look at President Trump, the media and what the new administration calls alternative facts. On Saturday, in his first full day in office, Trump visited CIA headquarters. Speaking of front of the CIA’s Memorial Wall, he told the agency he had a running war with the media.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: *So I can only say that I am with you a thousand percent. And the reason you’re my first stop is that, as you know, I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on Earth. And they sort of made it sound like I had a feud with the intelligence community. And I just want to let you know, the reason you’re number one stop is exactly the opposite. Exactly. And they understand that, too.*

AMY GOODMAN: That was just the beginning of the new administration’s attack on the press. According to The Washington Post, after Trump returned from the CIA, he turned on the television to see hundreds of thousands of protesters taking part in the Women’s March on Washington, and images showing **large patches of white empty space** on the Mall during his inauguration. Many outlets were broadcasting images showing how the size of his inauguration was far smaller than Obama’s first inauguration in 2009. Despite objections from his advisers, **Trump then ordered his new press secretary**, Sean Spicer, to walk out into the White House press room and read an emergency press statement.

PRESS SECRETARY SEAN SPICER: *This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe. Even The New York Times printed a photograph showing the—that—a misrepresentation of the crowd in the original tweet in their paper, which showed the full extent of the support, depth and crowd and intensity that existed. These attempts to lessen the enthusiasm of the inauguration are shameful and wrong. ... The president is committed to unifying our country, and that was the focus of his inaugural address. This kind of dishonesty in the media, the challenging—the bringing about our nation together is making it more difficult. There’s been a lot of talk in the media about the responsibility to hold Donald Trump accountable. And I’m here to tell you that it goes two ways. We’re going to hold the press accountable, as well.*

AMY GOODMAN: That’s White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer. He left the stage before taking any questions Saturday afternoon. Then, on Sunday, Meet the Press host Chuck Todd confronted counselor to the president **Kellyanne Conway** about Spicer’s lies.

KELLYANNE CONWAY: Don’t be so overly dramatic about it, Chuck. What it—you’re saying it’s a falsehood. And they’re giving—Sean Spicer, our press secretary, **gave alternative facts** to that. But the point remains—

CHUCK TODD: Wait a minute. Alternative facts?

KELLYANNE CONWAY: —that there’s—

CHUCK TODD: Alternative facts? Four of the five facts he uttered—the one thing he got right—

KELLYANNE CONWAY: Hey, Chuck, why—hey, Chuck—

CHUCK TODD: —was Zeke Miller. **Four of the five facts he uttered were just not true**. Look, alternative facts are not facts. **They’re falsehoods**.

AMY GOODMAN: Then, on Monday, Sean Spicer held his first official press briefing, where he was grilled about his comments from Saturday. Spicer claimed, quote, "**Sometimes we can disagree with the facts**."

JONATHAN KARL: Before I get to a policy question, just a question about the nature of your job.

PRESS SECRETARY SEAN SPICER: Yeah.

JONATHAN KARL: Is it your intention to always tell the truth from that podium? And will you pledge never to knowingly say something that is not factual?

PRESS SECRETARY SEAN SPICER: It is. It’s an honor to do this. And, yes, I believe that we have to be honest with the American people. **I think sometimes we can disagree with the facts**. There are certain things that we may miss—we may not fully understand when we come out. But **our intention is never to lie to you**, Jonathan. Our job is to make sure that sometimes—and you’re in the same boat. I mean, there are times when you guys tweet something out or write a story, and you publish a correction. That doesn’t mean that you were intentionally trying to deceive readers and the American people, does it? And I think we should be afforded the same opportunity.

AMY GOODMAN: To talk more about President Trump and the media, we are joined by two guests. Here in Park City, Brian Knappenberger is with us, director of a new documentary premiering here at Sundance this afternoon called Nobody Speak: Trials of the Free Press. And in New York, Mark Hertsgaard is with us, investigative editor at The Nation magazine, author of seven books, including On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency.

So, Brian, let’s begin with you.

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: What happened this weekend? You’ve got this raging press secretary—

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: —who storms out into the press room. They say that he’s going to hold a press briefing. They wait for an hour—a press conference.

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: And he just makes these series of lies—

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: —says it was the largest inauguration, not only in U.S. history, but in the world.

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: Right. It’s extraordinary. I mean, it’s extraordinary even listening to the clips you just played, I mean, and remembering we’re on day three here of this Trump administration. But really what we’re seeing is an extension of what we’ve been seeing—what we’ve seen from the last year from candidate Trump. I mean, his rise was really a result of an all-out assault on the press. I mean, it was one thing after another. He would berate the press. He called them names, "scum." He said he was going to open up libel laws and "sue you like you’ve never been sued before." He would go around the press. He would attack even things like satire, things like Saturday Night Live, or the cast of Hamilton or something. I mean, anything that threatened him or anything that approached an adversarial question at all, he would just go crazy with. So I think we’re in a period where this is something we really have to worry about. We just don’t know what this guy will be capable of doing with the executive branch at his control.

AMY GOODMAN: Mark Hertsgaard, your first impressions of the President Trump presidency dealing with the press?

MARK HERTSGAARD: You heard Mr. Trump himself say it: He is in a war with the press, and it has been long-standing. You know, there’s an old saying in media circles, though: "It’s never wise for an elected official to pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel." Now, that’s a reference to a hundred years ago, when it was newspapers that dominated the press, but I think that Donald Trump is going down a very dangerous road here.

I think what’s interesting, having written a book about the White House press corps and how, in general, the White House press corps wants to get along with any president, whatever the party, they want to have access to White House officials. **They like to do that inside-baseball kind of coverage**. I think that what might be happening here, though, is that Donald Trump and his administration—Sean Spicer, the press secretary—may end up provoking the Washington press corps, and the mainstream media, in general, into becoming an adversarial press, which is not what they want to do, the media. It is what the Constitution and American civics calls on the media to do, to hold presidents and elected officials accountable by being adversarial, by asking tough questions. In general, **that’s not the way the Washington press corps operates**. And yet, I think when - **they now have a choice**. Trump is so aggressive against them, and Spicer, as well, that the Washington press corps is either going to respond back and be adversarial or they’re just going to take it. And I think that that’s probably not going to end well for either party, and certainly not for the White House. I think they’re going down a dangerous road that they’re going to regret.

But the problem is, **they’ve got a president who has a habit of telling falsehoods** and has a very thin skin. You mentioned, Amy, that he ordered Sean Spicer to go out there and give that statement on Saturday, with knowable, easily demonstrable falsehoods. You know, that plays to his political base, the one out of three Americans who are going to stick with Donald Trump no matter what. I don’t think it’s going to play to that middle one-third of Americans, some of whom voted for him in November.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to go back to Monday’s press conference with the press secretary, Sean Spicer. I want to go to this clip right now of Sean Spicer. He talked at the end of the news conference about how demoralizing it was for the press to be critical of the president. Let’s see if we can get that clip.

PRESS SECRETARY SEAN SPICER: I think, over and over again, there’s this constant attempt to undermine his credibility and the movement that he represents. And it’s frustrating for not just him, but I think so many of us that are trying to work to get this message out. And it’s—and so, I mentioned this to Jonathan, but part of this is a two-way street. Like, we want to—we want to have a healthy dialogue, not just with you, but with the American people, because he’s fighting for jobs, he’s fighting to make this country safer. But when you’re constantly getting told, "That can’t be true," "We doubt that you can do this," "This won’t happen," and that’s the narrative when you turn on television every single day, it’s a little frustrating.

AMY GOODMAN: So, there you have Sean Spicer, that it’s demoralizing when the press is critical, Brian.

BRIAN KNAPPENBERGER: It’s demoralizing when the press is critical. What a comical statement, almost. What’s the purpose of a free and independent press? It is to be critical. It’s to **speak truth to power**. I think they got to get over it and understand that they’re in the—you know, they’re in the business of running the country now, and focus on what they need to be doing, and understand that this is critical to the way things work.

# Pundits on First Week in Office

Daily Kos

Abbreviated pundit roundup: Trump’s chaotic, destructive first week in office.

By Georgia Logothetis

Friday January 27, 2017

We begin today’s roundup with **The New York Times** and its editorial on Donald Trump’s “tantrum” on Mexico:

*Less than a week into the job, President Trump on Thursday raised the specter of a trade war with America’s third-largest partner, Mexico, as the White House warned that the United States could impose a 20 percent tariff on Mexican imports. [...]*

*Sending the Mexican economy into a tailspin is the surest way to reverse that trend, which historically has been driven by market forces, and has never been deterred much by fences or walls. Besides,* ***a tax on Mexican imports would be paid by American consumers and businesses that buy those goods****. Americans would pay for the wall, not Mexicans*.

Tim Mak at The Daily Beast breaks down Donald Trump’s “word salad” at the GOP retreat:

*When he arrived Thursday, he delivered a word salad of a* ***speech—a rambling, self-aggrandizing set of remarks characterized by vague promises, questionable claims, and confusion****. Notably, Trump pledged to Republican lawmakers that he would investigate voter fraud—an issue driven almost entirely by himself, and based on no evidence—prompting a dull silence from Republicans in the crowd, many of whom wish the topic would just go away. [...]*

*Trump’s opposition isn’t just going to get used to it. Protests erupted outside as Trump addressed the Republican faithful. It seems that the City of Brotherly Love doesn’t have much love for President Trump—thousands gathered to demonstrate against the newly sworn-in president.*

Ed Kilgore adds:

*The congressional Republican retreat in Philadelphia this week was supposed to foster highly efficient private discussions and briefings, and let the solons emerge from their labors revealed as a lean, mean, legislating machine. From reports at the end of the first day, however, they looked more like* ***lost sheep****, disappointed at the inability of their leaders to provide clear direction on how they would negotiate the tangle of health care, budget, and tax legislation they’ve committed to enact. There is particular anxiety about the very first item on everyone’s agenda: the repeal and replacement of Obamacare*

Adam Gopnik at **The New Yorker** on “1984”:

*The blind, blatant disregard for truth is offered without even the sugar-façade of sweetness of temper or equableness or entertainment—offered not with a sheen of condescending consensus but in an ancient* ***tone of rage, vanity, and vengeance****. Trump is pure raging authoritarian id.*

*And so, rereading Orwell, one is reminded of what Orwell got right about this kind of brute authoritarianism—and that was essentially that it rests on lies told so often, and so repeatedly, that fighting the lie becomes not simply more dangerous but more exhausting than repeating it. Orwell saw, to his credit, that the act of falsifying reality is only secondarily a way of changing perceptions. It is, above all, a way of asserting power.*

Steven Rattner, writing in **The Washington Post**, warns on an under-the-radar Trump nominee:

*[W]ithin the Trump team, the views of Representative Mick Mulvaney, Republican of South Carolina, his little-known choice to lead the important Office of Management and Budget, rank as* ***among the most reactionary****.*

*Only slivers of this were visible in Mr. Mulvaney’s uneventful confirmation hearing on Tuesday.*

*In fact, Mr. Mulvaney — a founding member of the Freedom Caucus with an almost perfect conservative voting record — spent his six-year congressional career leading the charge against federal spending and borrowing, voting against everything from Hurricane Sandy relief to reopening the government after the 2013 shutdown.*

*His intransigence placed him well to the right of Republican leadership, including former Speaker John Boehner, whom he repeatedly opposed for — get this — being excessively soft on curbing disbursements from the federal purse*.

**Catherine Rampell** points out Trump is running the government like he ran his failing businesses:

*One week into the presidency, we’ve gotten a taste of Trump’s management style. And so far it’s been plagued by many of the* ***bad habits common to poorly run businesses****. Take, for example, his administration’s clear indifference to — or outright rejection of — good measurement and analytics. [...] Needless to say, there are major differences between running a business and running a government; it’s a myth that aptitude at one necessarily translates to aptitude at the other. But with ineptitude, maybe it’s a different story.*

And, on a final note, **Damon Linker** breaks down “the normal, the the abnormal and the truly alarming”:

*For the first time in my life, I genuinely fear for the future of the nation's democratic norms and institutions. But that doesn't mean that every single thing the new president does or says is an occasion for full-bore panic. More than ever, all of us need to keep our heads and not fall into a pattern of* ***issuing hourly alarms about the imminent demise of democracy and advent of a fascist dictatorship in the United States****.*

*Some of what we're seeing is truly alarming — direct challenges to liberal democratic norms. But other moves are typical early actions of post-Reagan Republican presidents, while still others go much further than previous administrations but should be considered acceptable (if perhaps deeply worrying) efforts to shift policy direction in a dramatic though not democratically illegitimate way.*

*It is crucially important to distinguish among these different types of moves. It's the only way to maintain some sense of equilibrium and orientation in a* ***profoundly destabilizing and deranging moment in American political history***.

# 9 Terrible Things Trump Has Done in Just a Week

**There are four more years of this to come**.

By Kali Holloway / AlterNet January 26, 2017

It’s been just seven days since Donald Trump took office. While the media spent most of that time spilling digital ink over inauguration numbers, **the new administration was diminishing women’s health and safety around the world, chipping away at health care for millions of Americans and pouring money that could feed and insure children into a useless garbage heap along the border**. It was a bad week for politics and decency, which have always been on frigid terms, but are now dead to each other.

There were other things, too. Trump **threatened Chicago with martial law** on what he thought was a double-dog dare from fellow racist Bill O’Reilly. He promised to install monitors—glorified tattletales, really—to oversee federal agencies and report back to brass at the White House. After again trotting out the lie about immigrants and dead people voting, Trump promised an investigation into the widely debunked issue of **election fraud** (though not into Russian election meddling), which should start with his own family and staff. Speaking of Steve Bannon, the grand wizard of the so-called alt-right and White House senior adviser continued the Trump team’s cynical campaign to keep their base paranoid, uninformed and stupid by pretending their boss is a victim of the press. Newsweek discovered **Bannon, Kellyanne Conway, Sean Spicer and Jared Kushner all have email accounts on a private system**. And as the final, delusional cherry on the poisonous cake, Trump compared himself to Abraham Lincoln.

He also signed a bunch of executive orders. Far more important than all the background noise is the **authoritarian craziness that Trump is codifying into law**. These plans and policies will wreak irreparable havoc and damage, causing suffering and pain to millions in the U.S. and beyond. Remember—this is just seven days' worth of destruction. We've got four more years of this.

**Here's 9 terrible things** Trump did in just seven days.

## 1. Greenlit the Dakota Access and Keystone pipelines.

On Tuesday, Trump signed three executive orders to benefit oil pipelines and remove Obama environmental protections. The Dakota Access memorandum notes the pipeline is “90 percent complete,” and seeks to expedite approvals for permits to “construct and operate the DAPL, including easements or rights-of-way to cross Federal areas.” The Keystone order invites “TransCanada Keystone Pipeline to promptly re-submit its application to the Department of State” for **fast-tracked approval within 60 days**. Trump also signed an order demanding that the Secretary of Commerce devise a plan ensuring **all pipelines are constructed using U.S. iron and steel**. There are outstanding questions about what the orders will actually mean, since they mandate quick turnarounds on approvals but **include no actual directives about resuming construction**.

It’s worth pointing out here that Trump, who has refused to divest of his many business conflicts, has been an investor in one pipeline and may still have holdings in the other. As Huffington Post writer Michael McLaughlin notes:

*In May 2015, according to campaign disclosure reports, Trump owned between $500,000 and $1 million worth of shares of Energy Transfer Partners, the pipeline’s lead developer, but had less than $50,000 invested when he sold off the remainder of his shares this summer, according to The Washington Post. As of last May, Trump had at least $100,000 invested in Phillips 66, which owns a quarter of the oil line, according to the AP.*

Kelcy Warren, head of DAPL builder Energy Transfer Partners, donated more than $100,000 to various Trump supporting entities over the course of the presidential campaign. Though Trump reportedly sold off his ETP holdings last year, other investors were surely heartened by the executive action. Fortune reports that one day after the memorandum was signed, shares of the company were moving precipitously upward.

## 2. Reinstated the anti-abortion global 'gag rule,' which will increase the number of unsafe abortions around the world.

The Helms Amendment has outlawed the use of U.S. foreign aid dollars to fund abortion services to women since the early 1970s. That is not enough to appease the rabid anti-reproductive justice movement in this country, which won’t be satisfied until it threatens the health of every woman around the world. Hence Trump’s signing of an order that brings back Ronald Reagan’s 1984 Mexico City Policy—last in effect during the Bush 43 era—which **bans U.S. support to foreign organizations that offer abortion or abortion counseling to women**. Essentially, the U.S. will now tell foreign organizations it helps support in even the smallest of ways how to spend their own money. As Planned Parenthood head Cecile Richards explains:

*This means that if a clinic receives even $1 of U.S. foreign assistance for family planning, its doctors and nurses are limited in what they can do to help their patients. They can’t counsel a woman on the full range of health options legally available to her, refer her to another provider for specialized care or even give her a pamphlet with medically accurate information. That’s why we call it the global gag rule, because* ***it prevents doctors from talking to their patients*** *and providing services that are legal in their own countries—and in the U.S.—and it keeps people from participating in the democratic process of their own countries. This means clinics closing their doors, more unintended pregnancies and more unsafe abortion*.

It also means that potentially billions of dollars will be withheld with organizations doing lifesaving medical research and other work beyond U.S. borders. Vox notes that the Trump order expands on the amount of affected funding by 15 times:

*According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on health issues, the policy will now apply to aid money coming not just from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), as before, but also from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and even to Peace Corps volunteers working on family planning in the field.*

## 3. Scrapped a money-saving fee cut for new homeowners.

The very first post-inaugural move Trump made was signing an executive order voiding President Obama’s mortgage cost reduction. The .25 percent cut to federal mortgage insurance, set to take effect today, would have saved new homeowners roughly $500 a year. The rate drop would have benefited first-time and lower-income home buyers with Federal Housing Authority-backed mortgage loans. For a self-proclaimed warrior for the middle class, it’s a seemingly contradictory first action to take, unless said warrior is also a pathological liar, in which case it makes total sense.

## 4. Froze federal hires.

On Monday, Trump ordered a **hiring freeze on most government workers**. The memorandum states that “**no vacant positions existing at noon on January 22, 2017, may be filled and no new positions may be created**,” with exceptions for military, public safety and national security personnel. The order cuts off positions for thousands of highly skilled scientists, engineers and nurses—who are not exempt under the “public safety” clause—many of whom are actually indispensable to the stated goals of the Trump administration. The order also places a burden on job-seeking veterans, who represent 30 percent of federal workers and are given preferential treatment in government hiring, according to Military.com. Vets who were already in process toward being hired for a federal position will no longer be up for those roles. The site also notes, "the hiring freeze **would apply to the VA**, which had been seeking to bring on 2,000 new employees to help clear up appointment backlogs and improve care.” More than half a million veterans already endure month-long waits for attention at the agency.

“President Trump’s action will disrupt government programs and services that benefit everyone and actually increase taxpayer costs by forcing agencies to hire more expensive contractors to do work that civilian government employees are already doing for far less,” David Cox Sr., president of the American Federation of Government Employees, told the Washington Post. “**This hiring freeze will mean longer lines at Social Security offices, fewer workplace safety inspections, less oversight of environmental polluters, and greater risk to our nation’s food supply and clean water systems**.”

## 5. Began plans to build the big, stupid wall and other nods to his base of anti-immigrant hysterics.

Citing “**alternative facts**” not worth repeating about Mexican immigration, Trump’s “Border Security” executive order states that Congress will allot federal funds—that’s “taxpayer dollars” in plainspeak—for the “immediate construction” of a southern border wall. It includes plans to increase the number of border patrol agents by 5,000 and construct more detention facilities, and outlines a broad crackdown on immigrants who cross the southern border.

Paul Ryan, who is apparently confused about what the term “fiscal conservative” means, says Congress will pony up the $10-$15 billion it does not have for children and veterans’ health care or welfare to build Trump’s completely useless monstrosity. The entire Republican Party is still peddling the lie that Mexico will pay as soon as it receives the invoice for the wall order, though Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto again dismissed that insane, illogical idea on Wednesday. On Thursday, **Nieto canceled a meeting with Trump**.

## 6. Targeted sanctuary cities.

In a separate order, Trump takes aim at sanctuary cities, banning federal funds to jurisdictions that “**willfully violate Federal law** in an attempt to shield aliens from removal from the United States.” As activist and policy analyst Samuel Sinyangwe notes on Twitter, the State Homeland Security Program, Urban Area Security Initiative and Department of Homeland Security collectively provide **$275 million to New York City each year in federal anti-terrorism funds that would be cut under Trump’s new action**.

For an added touch of useless pettiness, Trump’s order includes an attempt at public shaming in Section 8b, which states the administration will “make public a comprehensive [weekly] list of criminal actions committed by aliens and any jurisdiction that ignored or otherwise failed to honor any detainers with respect to such aliens.” The next time you wonder how government is wasting time and money, remember that your tax dollars (but not Trump’s, because he reportedly doesn’t pay taxes) are funding junk like this.

## 7. Started dismantling the Affordable Care Act.

In an order purporting to “minimize the economic burden” of the ACA, Trump instructs the Secretary of Health and Human Services and heads of other departments to **“waive, defer, grant exemptions from [and] delay” requirements of the Obamacare law**. Because of the lack of preciseness in the order, experts were unable to pin down precisely how and when changes would start to take effect. There’s also the fact that Republicans, despite dozens of attempts to repeal the plan and years of time to brainstorm, have offered neither a replacement plan nor concrete strategy for its implementation.

"The order could affect virtually anything in the law, provided it is couched as a delay in implementing the law," Stuart Butler, of the Brookings Institution, told Reuters.

Robert Laszewski, head of Health Policy and Strategy Associates, has spoken and written about the problems with Obamacare over the years. Despite recognizing the plan's imperfections, Laszewski believes Trump and the GOP’s actions on health care will harm millions of ACA subscribers.

“Instead of sending a signal that there’s going to be an orderly transition, they’ve sent a signal that it’s going to be a disorderly transition,” Laszewski told the Washington Post. “How does the Trump administration think this is not going to make the situation worse?”

## 8. Demanded half-assed environmental reviews so development can proceed, consequences be damned.

“Too often, infrastructure projects in the United States have been routinely and excessively delayed by agency processes and procedures,” the executive order expediting environmental reviews and approvals reads. “These delays have increased project costs and blocked the American people from the full benefits of increased infrastructure investments, which are important to allowing Americans to compete and win on the world economic stage.”

To keep pesky things like **clean air and water quality** concerns from getting in the way of quick and dirty major infrastructure developments, Trump’s executive order will “streamline and expedite...environmental reviews and approvals for all infrastructure projects."

The order directs the chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to make a decision within 30 days on “high priority” projects such as “port facilities, airports, pipelines, bridges, and highways.” All things that are utterly useless if we all sicken and die from drinking polluted water or breathing toxic air.

Once again, predicting how this will all shake out is difficult. “It remained unclear how Trump’s order would expedite those environmental reviews,” Steven Mufson and Juliet Eilperin write at the Washington Post. “**Many are statutory and the legislation that created them cannot be swept aside by an executive order**.”

## 9. Put gag orders on multiple government agencies and removed vital internet content.

Staffers at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Transportation, Interior Department, National Institutes of Health, Department of Agriculture, Health and Human Services (which includes the CDC and Food and Drug Administration) and other agencies were reportedly told **not to speak to the press or provide information to the public** for an indefinite period. New projects were also halted at a number of agencies.

The EPA was instructed by the Trump administration to **take down its website page on climate change**, according to a Reuters report. There were reports that the Trump team would be reviewing previous EPA studies and numbers, and also embargoing new studies pending review. Those steps follow the Trump transition team’s request that the Energy Department fork over the names of staff who worked on climate change issues. The team also asked the State Department for a list of positions and programs aimed at achieving gender equality.

That effectively muzzles agencies concerned with science, health, the environment, medicine and food. Essentially, everything critical to human survival.

Perhaps bowing to public outcry, USDA officials reportedly rescinded the gag order on Tuesday. There were reports of agencies going rogue, like these supposed unauthorized Twitter accounts of federal science workers, or the now offline but cached at the @WhiteHouseLeaks account. There was also the Badlands National Park Twitter, which for a few hours rebelliously tweeted climate change facts.

In the minutes after Trump's inauguration, **pages dedicated to civil rights, climate change, LGBT rights, and health care disappeared from the White House website**. Spanish language pages were also removed, while a page titled “Standing Up For Our Law Enforcement Community” was newly added. “The Trump Administration will be a law and order administration,” the page reads. “The dangerous anti-police atmosphere in America is wrong.”

Kali Holloway is a senior writer and the associate editor of media and culture at AlterNet.

# First Ten Days in Office

Donald Trump has begun his fight to Make America Strong Again

* Began rolling back the Affordable Care Act
* Issued an executive order to ban immigrants and visitors from seven “Muslim majority” countries, stop taking Syrian refugees, and rebuild the infrastructure for a Muslim registry.
* Moved forward with building a border wall
* Cut funding to “sanctuary cities” without details on how to do it
* Expanded anti-abortion ban to all U.S. global health aid
* Cleared roadblocks for a pipeline that threatens the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s sacred land and water supply
* removed the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from the Principals Committee of the National Security Council and added as a regular member Steve Bannon (Assistant to the President and Chief Strategist) and Chief of Staff Reince Priebus.

# Trump Nominates Neil Gorsuch for the Supreme Court

January 31, 2017

President Trump nominated 49 year old **Neil Gorsuch** for the Supreme Court. Judge Neil Gorsuch is a U.S. Court of Appeals federal judge for the 10th Circuit. He is a graduate of Harvard Law School. He is one of the most extreme nominees in the court history. Gorsuch has shown himself to be a protector of polluters and industry over the rights of the people of the United States. He has denigrated the power of the Environmental Protection Agency to make the rules necessary to carry out its responsibilities. He would move the Supreme Court to limit the EPA’s authority to protect the public in the areas of clean air, water, and the climate. He would help limit the ability of citizens to sue if harmed by pollution.

Neil Gorsuch, while serving on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, voted to gut the Affordable Care Act's birth control mandate. In addition, he would vote to allow Planned Parenthood to be defunded. His record shows a hostility to Roe v. Wade.

Gorsuch was one of those judges picked by the far right-wing Koch brothers funded Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation to Trump’s list of possible nominees.

On the divided Supreme Court he would represent a tie-breaking vote in the areas of clean air, water, endangered species, public land use, union rights, the climate, women's health, and basic protections of our civil liberties. He will vote in favor of Citizens United. He believes that the Constitution should be interpreted exactly as it was written 200 years ago (**when it serves his purpose**).

# Second Week in Office

On January 31, 2017, Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee suspended committee rules and voted to send the nominations of Tom Price to head the Department of Health and Human Services and Steven Mnuchin to be Treasury secretary to the Senate floor. Democrats had stayed away from the hearing so the Republicans then **voted to suspend the rule that required at least one Democrat to be present for business to be conducted**.

On February 1, 2017, the Democrats on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee refused to attend the meeting and the **rules were suspended** and the Republicans sent the nominee for the EPA to the Senate Floor.

On February 1, 2017, The Senate voted to confirm Rex Tillerson as secretary of state by a vote of 56-43. Democrats Heitkamp, Manchin, and Warner voted in favor. All other Democrats voted Nay. Independent Senator King did not vote.

H.J. 41 This joint resolution **nullifies** the "Disclosure of Payments by Resource Extraction Issuers" rule finalized by the Securities and Exchange Commission on July 27, 2016. (The rule, mandated under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, requires resource extraction issuers to disclose payments **made to governments for the commercial development of oil, natural gas, or minerals**.)

# Countries Rankled by Trump in First Two Weeks

A map of the many countries President Trump has rankled in his first two weeks

By Aaron Blake February 2, 2017

The Fix

The Washington Post reported Wednesday evening that President Trump's post-inauguration phone call with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull took a turn for the confrontational.

Trump bragged about the size of his election win and **cut the call short after berating Turnbull** about the Obama administration's deal to take more than 1,000 refugees from a detention center in Australia, which is one of the United States' biggest allies.

By Thursday morning, Trump was tangling with another foreign country — this one a long-standing adversary, Iran — over a deal it cut with the Obama administration, and again doing so in an in-your-face and apparently less-than-diplomatic fashion. Trump put Iran “on notice” for its recent ballistic missile test.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

Iran has been formally PUT ON NOTICE for firing a ballistic missile. Should have been thankful for the terrible deal the U.S. made with them!

3:34 AM - 2 Feb 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

Iran was on its last legs and ready to collapse until the U.S. came along and gave it a life-line in the form of the Iran Deal: $150 billion

3:39 AM - 2 Feb 2017

Trump's ability to handle foreign policy with the delicacy it often requires has long topped Americans' list of concerns about him. And less than two weeks into his presidency, he's done little to allay those critics' concerns.

At this point, Trump has tangled with and done things that risk alienating a number of key allies and adversaries — a number arguably stretching well into the double digits now.

Trump's supporters may cheer this in-your-face approach, especially when it comes to America's adversaries. But the fact remains that his style is unprecedented -- and unprecedentedly at risk of causing international disputes.

Below, a quick recap:

## Iran

Trump has long made plain his skepticism about the Iran nuclear deal. But putting an adversarial foreign power “on notice” is a provocative move for any U.S. president — and especially given Iran's expressed interest in a nuclear program. Trump was echoing his national security adviser, former general Michael Flynn, who said the same thing Wednesday.

Trump tweet warns Iran it has been 'put on notice'

While most Americans were still asleep early Thursday morning, President Trump tweeted, saying 'Iran has been formally put on notice for firing a ballistic missile. Should have been thankful for the terrible deal the U.S. made with them.' The White House condemned the test from earlier this week as a violation of the seven-nation agreement restricting Tehran's nuclear program. (Reuters)

“Instead of being thankful to the United States for these agreements, Iran is now feeling emboldened,” Flynn said. “As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice.”

Iran responded Thursday by dismissing Trump's “ranting” and saying it will “vigorously” continue testing missiles. We haven't heard the last of this.

## Mexico

Trump has now signed an executive order to begin construction of the U.S.-Mexico border wall and continues to promise to force Mexico to pay for it. And for a moment there, the Trump team was saying its mechanism for making that dubious goal a reality was to put a 20 percent tariff on imported goods from Mexico. That's what White House press secretary Sean Spicer said before clarifying that it was just one option.

Amid all that, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, whose appearance with Trump during the 2016 campaign in Mexico was a domestic nightmare and ended in a he-said, she-said dispute over whether they discussed the border wall, canceled a planned trip to Washington.

Trump then held a phone call with Pena Nieto on Wednesday in which he reportedly mentioned the possibility of sending U.S. troops to Mexico to deal with the “bad hombres” there. That's hugely provocative, from a superpower with whom you share a border.

## Australia

For more on the refugee deal Trump objected to — which he errantly said involved “illegal immigrants” — here's WorldViews' Amanda Erickson:

*According to the agreement, which took months of negotiation, America would accept about 1,200 refugees (not, as Trump called them, “illegal immigrants”) from Australia. The United States would prioritize families and children, and all candidates would be subjected to a thorough vetting process. America's Department of Homeland Security would conduct two rounds of interviews with each candidate*.

Australia is playing down the possibility of a rift — but saying Trump must follow through on the deal. And Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) on Thursday morning offered this striking comment:

This is stunning from McCain: "I called Australia’s Ambassador to the United States this morning to express my unwavering support ..."

8:05 AM - 2 Feb 2017 · Washington, DC

Australian prime minister after Trump call: ‘I always stand up for Australia’

After what President Trump reportedly called "the worst call by far,” with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Jan. 28, Turnbull gave sparse details at a news conference on Feb. 2, but said, "I stand up for Australia in every forum, public or private."

## China

Trump's post-election phone call with the president of Taiwan ran afoul of long-standing protocol with China. As I explained at the time:

China considers Taiwan a province, and the United States has pursued a “One China” policy since the 1970s. To that end, the leaders of the United States and Taiwan haven't spoken, that we know of, in decades, given such a dialogue generally symbolizes government recognition.

After news broke of the call with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen and the backlash began, Trump explained that it was Taiwan who initiated the conversation, and he downplayed it as a “congratulatory call.”

But sources at the White House later explained that the call was deliberately provocative. And now those lingering tensions have spilled over into Trump's presidency, with China objecting to Taiwan having sent a delegation featuring its former premier to Trump's inauguration and responding by warning Trump about the United States abiding by its “One China” policy.

## Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen (and Iran again)

These are the seven countries from which Trump has barred entrants for a period of four months due to concerns about them exporting terrorists through the immigration and refugees processes.

President Trump signed an executive order halting all refugees from entering the U.S. for 120 days, among other provisions.

## Germany

Peter Navarro, the head of the new National Trade Council, said this week that Germany is using its currency to “exploit” its European neighbors and the United States — comments that basically echo what Trump said a few days prior. Trump said in an interview with the Times and the German newspaper Bild that “you look at the European Union, and it’s Germany — basically a vehicle for Germany.”

Trump has long been critical of the E.U.'s usefulness and praised Britain's vote to leave it, but the new comments particularly target Germany as the wizard behind the curtain.

Germany's foreign minister, who has called Trump a “threat,” is now headed to Washington.

## Japan, Canada, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam (and Mexico and Australia again)

These are the countries in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal spearheaded by Republicans and President Barack Obama, which Trump withdrew from with his first executive order. Japan, in particular, now fears a trade war.

## Ukraine

Trump has long professed a desire for better relations with Russia, despite its incursion into Crimea having raised concerns across the Western world. And in recent days, as Russian-backed forced have stepped up the fight, Trump has been conspicuously silent to some. During his campaign, Trump assured that Russia wouldn't go further into Ukraine.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer offered only this at Wednesday's press briefing:

QUESTION: Russia and Russian-backed rebels are moving the lines forward. And I'm wondering if the president feels that Russia is testing him because this is coming so early in his administration before he got a chance to fully assemble his team. And what he plans to do about it.

SPICER: The president's been kept aware of through his National Security Council and his national security team as a whole what's been going on in the Ukraine. And we'll have further updates as we go on.

Aaron Blake is senior political reporter for The Fix. Follow @aaronblake

# Custom Agents Going Rogue?

Is Trump’s Customs Agency Going Rogue?

BY LEIGHTON WOODHOUSE

LA Progressive

Last Saturday night, one day after President Trump signed his executive order temporarily canceling the travel visas of citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries, and of refugees all over the world, two U.S. Congresswomen paid a visit to the Tom Bradley Terminal of the Los Angeles International Airport. Outside of the terminal, hundreds of protesters held candles and picket signs, chanting their support for immigrants and refugees, and their opposition to Trump. (By Sunday the crowd would swell to thousands.)

Representatives **Nanette Barragán** and **Judy Chu** came to show their solidarity with the protesters, to learn how many passengers Customs and Border Protection were detaining, and whether any of them were from their Southern California districts. “What I quickly found out was that the [terminal’s] CBP office was closed, conveniently,” Barragán told me. They were given a phone number to call.

During the next hour Barragán and Chu were subjected to the kind of diversion, buck-passing and stonewalling you might expect from a cable TV company when you try to switch providers. But in this case, the people on the other end of the line were right there in the same building, and the ones **making the call were two elected members of Congress**.

“It was constant refusal, over and over,” recounted Barragán. When Barragán asked the CBP agent who she was taking her directions from — Barragán was trying to get the phone passed to a supervisor — the agent responded, “the President.” A few minutes later, she hung up on the Congresswomen.

When I asked Barragán what conclusions she drew from her experience, she spoke of the challenges Trump has posed to the Constitution. “My role is oversight of the president,” she said. “He’s issued an executive order that’s **not just un-American but unconstitutional**. We are the oversight of the executive branch. We also have the judiciary, who have issued a stay.”

**Miguel Santiago**, a Los Angeles Assemblymember who had also joined the protesters that night, was even more direct. The executive order, he said, was “a clear reflection of Donald Trump’s campaign and administration, **his trying to rule as a dictatorship**.” The CBP’s treatment of the two Congresswomen, in this reading, is just one expression of the executive branch’s disdain for even the mildest assertion of oversight.

Later Saturday night, word trickled out to the swarm of protesters, reporters and immigration attorneys in the Bradley Terminal that a federal judge in New York had issued a stay on the executive order, prohibiting CBP from summarily deporting travelers after they landed on U.S. soil. Cheers went up from the crowd. The grim faces of the lawyers relaxed just a bit. For a moment, it looked as though the checks and balances of American democracy had kicked in and corrected the new president’s overreach, just as designed.

**Faith Nouri**, an immigration attorney who had helped to organize the demonstration the night before, called the U.S. Marshals Service. She had noticed that, although a stay had been issued, there was no “proof of service” —a document filed in court certifying that the subject of a court order or other legal action has been officially notified of that order. One of the responsibilities of U.S. marshals is to serve these orders. Nouri had already tried to serve the CBP personally, but had been told that it would not receive the documents without a U.S. marshal present. (Neither the U.S. Marshals Service nor the CBP responded to direct questions for this article.)

Even though the court order was all over the news, she didn’t want to allow for any chance that the CBP agents at LAX might pretend they had never been notified of it. She wanted legal confirmation, in the form of a proof of service, that they knew about the order. Right now that confirmation didn’t exist.

An official with the Department of Justice assured me that the CBP had, in fact, received the order over the weekend. In an official statement, the department said this of the efforts of Nouri and other outside attorneys to serve process on the agencies: “Such action was completely unnecessary since the appropriate individuals at DOJ and the involved agencies had already been served.”

If that were in fact the case, however, Nouri had no knowledge of this, and the CBP was refusing to inform anyone one way or the other.

The U. S. marshal who Nouri contacted told her he needed his supervisor’s go-ahead, but his supervisor **wasn’t picking up the phone**. Nouri waited for him to call back. But Saturday came and went with no word from the marshals office.

On Sunday, Nouri reached someone who, she later learned, was the service’s PR person. He was friendly, but not very helpful. By now, LAX had been inundated by protesters stretching from Terminal 5 to Terminal 2, occupying a huge section of the ticketing area of Tom Bradley International Terminal, spilling out into the street, onto an overpass and on the top deck of a parking structure. The jubilation the night before at the issuance of the stay was short-lived; despite the court order, it appeared, travelers were still being detained.

At 8 a.m. Monday, at Nouri’s direction, four volunteer attorneys visited the U.S. Marshals Service office, located in the old Federal Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles. They were told that to deliver the court order, they needed to get the U.S. Attorney involved — a head-scratcher for the four lawyers. “Legally, lawyers don’t need to go to the U.S. Attorney,” one of the attorneys, Darius Amiri, told me. “It’s the **U.S. marshals’ job by statute to do this**.”

What followed was an even more absurd version of the human pinball game Judy Chu and Nanette Barragán had been subjected to. The four lawyers kept meeting with different deputies at the marshals office; every time the deputies came out, said Madiha Zuberi, another lawyer who was present, they seemed to be a bigger group. By now, **three different orders** had come down from three different federal courts, in New York, Massachusetts and California. (**Two more**, in Virginia and Washington state, would soon follow). The marshals told the lawyers that they weren’t comfortable serving orders from outside jurisdictions, even though they had national reach, and they wouldn’t serve the California one, either, because it didn’t explicitly stipulate that U.S. marshals were to do so, despite the fact that serving process is a routine part of their job description. The marshals suggested the four lawyers go back to the California judge and get the order amended.

“They weren’t combative or aggressive or condescending. They seemed more worried about the consequences,” said Amiri.

“They were deflecting,” explained Zuberi.

The lawyers finally managed to enlist the help of a Department of Justice lawyer who could accept the service of process on behalf of the CBP. With his help, they wouldn’t need U.S. marshals. The lawyers went to the Los Angeles Law Library to make copies of the order — “old school,” Zuberi laughed, “on the kind of copy machine you haven’t used since the third grade.”

The lawyers marched over to 300 Los Angeles St., a block from City Hall, to meet with the Department of Justice attorney and resolve the problem at last. Finally, they had all their ducks in a row. The DOJ lawyer brought the other attorneys to a legal clerk to certify the documents and serve him with them. But the clerk told them she couldn’t certify court orders from outside jurisdictions. So the lawyers submitted just the California order, with the others attached as exhibits.

“It was like a movie,” was how both Zuberi and Amiri described what happened next. Just as the clerk was about to put the stamp down, the door of an office behind them swung open, and a woman walked out. “We need to talk to you now,” she told the DOJ attorney. He said he’d be right over. “Now,” the unidentified woman repeated.

The DOJ attorney followed her into her office. A few minutes later, he returned and apologized to the other attorneys, saying that he couldn’t accept the service of process after all. They’d have to go back to the U.S. Marshals office once again, or get the American Civil Liberties Union or immigration attorney Stacy Tolchin, who were the official counsels for the lawsuit that prompted the court order, to contact the Office of Immigration Litigation in Washington, DC.

“The sense we got was that the executive was giving orders not to accept service,” explained Amiri. “There was a feeling that the executive branch [employees] were being told not to, or were worried about complying with, the directives of the judicial branch. That was very worrying to me as a lawyer, especially **given the lack of transparency we’re seeing out of the administration**.”

Within an hour of the DOJ attorney’s change of heart, **Trump had both fired acting Attorney General Susan Yates and replaced the acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement**, further scrambling the circular chain of command over the bureaucratic labyrinth the attorneys had become hopelessly lost in.

Now that the orders are in the public domain, when pressed by immigration attorneys, the CBP has taken the position that they’re complying with the court orders. “Those are just words,” said Zuberi. As of Monday night, she said, there were **reports of at least 100 people being detained**, in possible violation of the orders, including one person who had been held for at least 24 hours, with his laptop and phone confiscated and his social media feeds searched.

Zuberi stopped short of calling it a constitutional crisis, preferring the word “challenge.” But she acknowledged that she’s begun to read the U.S. Constitution again. “The last time I read constitutional law was in law school,” she said.

Nouri is less sanguine in drawing out the implications of their experience. “We’re supposed to have three branches of government,” she said. “**You can’t have the executive telling civil servants what to do and to violate a [judge’s] order. We’ve had a complete breakdown of the system.**”

Aside from the California court order, which applies to a single individual, Nouri insists that the orders are not being followed by CBP. She cites reports of individuals being held for four hours in a room they can’t leave, with their documents and their cellphone SIM cards taken from them while they’re being questioned. In her view, **that’s the very definition of “detention**,” which would be a violation of a California court order that came down Tuesday, and possibly of the ones that preceded it.

The firing of Susan Yates, she adds, was a warning to other government employees who step out of line. “That was a signal,” she said. “That’s what’s going to happen to you.”

At LAX on Tuesday, the situation felt calmer. The protesters had returned, but the crowd was a fraction of the size it had been over the weekend. The lawyers I spoke to at Tom Bradley said that **most people coming through customs from the seven flagged countries were being held and questioned longer than usual, but were eventually let through**. They hastened to add, however, that since CBP refuses to disclose how many people they’re detaining or questioning, the only cases they’re aware of are the ones that have come to their attention through family members. It’s entirely possible that CBP is detaining or deporting people who are traveling by themselves, whose existences the lawyers are unaware of. **“We’re not having productive conversations with the CBP**,” one of the attorneys told me.

Assemblymember Santiago sees a reflection of the president in the CBP’s distaste for transparency and its hostility toward those who question it. “The President is testing how far the levers of power go,” he said. **“The government is taking on the unstable personality of Donald Trump**.”

Leighton Woodhouse

Capital & Main

# This week in Trump’s America: Week 2

The Muslim ban, Neil Gorsuch, and the “worst call yet.”

Think Progress

It’s only been 14 days.

We may be binge-watching this presidency, but it’s all still happening in real time. And here at ThinkProgress, we are working to produce a weekly digest to help keep track of everything going on around us.

Week 2 followed a similar pattern to week 1: Trump’s actions on Friday led to massive protests all weekend, then Trump took a wave of new actions to try to distract from the backlash. Whether or not that’s a sustainable pattern for a presidency remains to be seen.

With the Muslim ban, the Supreme Court nomination, and everything else in between, there was no shortage of news this week.

• Muslim ban: Trump signed an executive order on Friday restricting migration from seven Muslim-majority countries and suspending Syrian refugee resettlement indefinitely, which prompted massive protests at JFK and other airports across the country. Yes, it’s a Muslim ban (and we’re going to keep calling it that). No, it’s not the same as what President Obama did in 2011 or in 2016. And yes, the white nationalists love it.

• “You’re Fired!”: When Acting Attorney General Sally Yates refused to defend Trump’s Muslim ban because she found it unlawful (a determination that it was her job to make), Trump fired her. It’s the first time a president has fired an attorney general since President Nixon.

• White nationalist power: Trump reorganized the National Security Council, downgrading the roles of the director of national intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to make room for his chief strategist, white nationalist Steve Bannon.

• To the right of Scalia: Trump nominated Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court in a prime-time presentation modeled off of reality television, complete with intentional theatrical optics. Gorsuch’s intensively conservative views pose a serious threat to reproductive freedom, LGBT rights, the environment, and just about any federal regulation that might protect people. Senate Democrats are already working to block his confirmation, but Trump is urging Senate Republicans to trigger the “nuclear option” — eliminating the filibuster?— to force the nomination through.

• A trip to Dover: Trump executed his first military raid as president, apparently “without sufficient intelligence, ground support, or adequate backup preparations.” The attack in Yemen resulted in the deaths many civilians, including an 8-year-old American girl, as well as a U.S. Navy SEAL, Chief Special Warfare Operator William “Ryan” Owens. Sean Spicer described it Thursday as “a successful operation by all standards.”

• On notice: After Iran test-fired a ballistic missile, National Security Adviser Michael Flynn put the country “on notice,” but didn’t explain what that meant.

• So-called “religious freedom”: After days of rumors, a draft leaked of a “religious freedom” executive order that would create a massive license to discriminate against LGBT people, those who’ve had premarital sex, and those seeking abortions. The White House denied any immediate intentions to sign it, but it seemed to align perfectly with what religious conservatives are expecting — and now begging for — from the administration.

• A Valentine to Wall Street: Trump has announced plans to sign an executive order Friday that will weaken some financial regulations and make it easier for Wall Street to screw over retirees.

• Not just Jews: Trump issued a statement honoring International Holocaust Remembrance Day that didn’t mention Jewish people. The omission was intentional; in fact, it was revealed Thursday that the State Department had drafted a different statement that did mention Jewish victims that the White House chose not to use. And there were no regrets.

• Compensating for hate: In addition to the widespread protests, many companies also responded with plans to counter the Muslim Ban, such as Starbucks committing to hiring 10,000 refugees, Lyft donating $1 million to the ACLU, and Google creating a $4 million crisis fund. The singer Sia also promised to match up to $100,000 in donations to the ACLU, and several other celebrities followed suit.

• Ambassador in chief: Excerpts of Trump’s calls with foreign leaders last Saturday indicate that he threatened to invade Mexico to take care of the “bad hombres” down there and that he hung up on Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull after trying to renege on a deal President Obama made to accept 1,250 refugees from an Australian detention center. Details of his call with Russian President Vladimir Putin remain elusive because the White House chose not to record it.

• Pure Islamophobia: The Trump administration wants a federal counter-terrorism program to abandon its focus on violent white supremacists so that it can focus exclusively on Muslim groups. When asked Thursday what the Trump administration planned to do about “homegrown” terrorist threats, Sean Spicer oddly replied that they’d start by looking at the borders.

• Backfiring: Trump threatened last week to cut federal funding for “sanctuary cities” — municipalities that refuse to hold undocumented immigrants in detention — but the number of sanctuary cities is only growing.

• Frederick Douglass is doing an amazing job: On Wednesday, Trump commemorated Black History Month with a bizarre speech that was largely about his performance in the election and some black people who have treated him nicely.

• Never mind, Milwaukee: Trump was scheduled to head to Wisconsin Thursday to deliver an economic address at the Harley-Davidson factory there, but that trip was canceled by Tuesday because the threat of protests made the motorcycle manufacturer uncomfortable.

• Peculiar tweak: The Treasury Department seems to have loosened some of the sanctions against Russia, though many are calling it an expected fix and not a change in policy.

Trump took a number of actions this week that incompletely fulfilled some promises. We found just one example of a clear break:

• 2 for 1, maybe someday: Trump promised a “a requirement that for every new federal regulation, two existing regulations must be eliminated,” but contrary to his claims, that’s not actually what his new executive order does.

This section was originally intended to contain around three to five examples, but that’s frankly not possible on weeks like this.

• Banning Muslims: Detaining people; handcuffing them; separating them from their parents, their caretakers, their patients, and the health care they need to live; and generally preventing them from ever seeing their families — just because of what country they are from — is not normal.

• Not in the know: Trump actually signed the Muslim ban while his Secretary of Homeland Security, Gen. John F. Kelly, was still receiving his first briefing about what the executive order would even do. It turns out he knew it was coming though, because he heard Trump talk about it on the campaign trail.

• Our way or the highway: If State Department employees have a problem with the Muslim ban, Sean Spicer said Monday that they can “either get with the program or they can go.” That could mean over 1,000 people would have to go.

• Bannon unchecked: Asked about Chief Strategist Steve Bannon’s remarks that Islam is “dark” and “not a religion of peace,” Sean Spicer said that Trump has a different view, but then refused an opportunity to distance the White House from the sentiment.

• UnDemocratic: To advance two of Trump’s cabinet nominees that Democrats threatened to block, Republicans on the Senate Finance Committee changed the rules to proceed without any Democrats present. The following day, the Environment and Public Works Committee employed the same tactic.

• What First Amendment?: Republican state lawmakers across the country are considering new laws to prohibit protests like those sparked at airports across the country by Trump’s Muslim ban.

• A short road to fascism: Experts on authoritarianism are even more concerned about Trump’s dictator-like tendencies in week two than they were in week one. Perhaps it’s no surprise, then, that this poster from the U.S. Holocaust Museum outlining the disturbingly familiar warning signs of fascism went viral this week:

• Trump hates studying: Asked by CBN’s David Brody about whether Trump would be moving the U.S.’s embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Trump provided an answer with key insights into his decision-making process: He “hates” to wait for research. “We’re doing very detailed studies on that and that will come out very soon. I hate to do that, because that’s not usually me — studies. It’s usually: I do what’s right, but this has two sides to it.”

The Trump administration told an overwhelming number of lies this week.

• Chaos is “nice”: Trump has repeatedly insisted that “the ban” is not a Muslim ban (it is), and as protests were already fomenting last Saturday over unjust detainments, he insisted that the ban was “working out very nicely.” Later in the week, White House Senior Adviser Stephen Miller similarly claimed that the only disruptions caused by the ban were those “created by protesters.”

• Two sizes too small: Kellyanne Conway defended the Muslim ban in an interview Saturday in which she claimed, “We’ve got the most generous immigration laws in the world, and we have big hearts as well.” Meanwhile, other countries were openly promising to welcome the refugees who would be denied entry to the U.S. by the executive order.

• By and large (and white nationalist): Asked about the near-universal criticism Trump has received from Jewish groups over the Holocaust Remembrance Day statement, Sean Spicer insisted that “by and large, he’s been praised for it,” defending that the president “went out of his way to recognize the Holocaust.” The only praise Trump has received has been from anti-Semites, and it certainly hasn’t been “by and large.”

• “An unbelievably qualified educator”: Defending Betsy DeVos’ nomination to be Secretary of Education, Sean Spicer called her “an unbelievably qualified educator and advocate for students, teachers, parent.” She has never taught and has no formal training in education whatsoever.

• Refugees are not illegal: In his attempts to substantiate his apparent hostility to Australia, Trump has repeatedly referred to the refugees President Obama agreed to accept as “illegal immigrants.” Refugees are arguably not immigrants at all until they resettle, and when they do, they are very much legal immigrants.

• Detainment, Schmetainment: The White House claims it’s no longer detaining anybody under the Muslim ban, but this is only because the administration doesn’t agree that it counts as detaining when people are held at airports for questioning.

• Alternative history: Kellyanne Conway defended the Muslim ban — and specifically the prohibition on refugees — by citing the “Bowling Green massacre,” an apparently horrific tragedy that never actually happened.

You may remember “Lyin’ Ted” and “Little Marco,” but this week President Trump devised a new, less-catchy nickname for someone he wanted to mock: Fake Tears Chuck Schumer.

The jab came after Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) condemned Trump’s Muslim ban on Sunday, getting choked up as he described it as “mean-spirited and un-American.”

At a press conference Monday morning, Trump countered:

Schumer’s communications director, Matt House, derided the name-calling as a distraction from the “un-American, poorly put-together, and rushed executive order.”

But Trump’s acolytes were all too happy to pile on Schumer. Former New York Police Department Commissioner Bernie Kerik, who supports the Muslim ban, insisted that Schumer didn’t show any emotion on 9/11. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich chastised Schumer for not crying over Americans who have been shot.

And Sean Spicer even defended Trump’s tweets at a press briefing. “Where’s Senator Schumer’s tears been for all the other problems that are going on in this country?” he asked, noting the many people struggling with homelessness and unemployment in Schumer’s state of New York. “It’s interesting that in eight years, with all the stuff that’s going on in this country in terms of crime and the economy, I haven’t seen too many tears come from Senator Schumer, so...”

Schumer’s cousin, comedian Amy Schumer, came to his defense on Instagram. “I know Chuck Schumer and HE CANNOT act trust me,” she wrote. “He can barely smile on cue. He can’t help but be transparent and genuine. He was hurt for those people and all the people facing such unconstitutional injustice.”

It’s been a dark week, y’all. And it’s easy to read through this wall of text and feel overwhelmed, alone, and powerless.

But one of the keys to resistance is resilience. There is strength in solidarity, and each march, rally, and protest is an opportunity for people to lift each other up. Those demonstrations send a message to our leaders, but through them, we also send a message to each other that we are not alone, and we stand together against the moral wrongs we see unfolding around us.

So this week, we leave you with a brief moment captured by our own Jack Jenkins at Dulles airport last weekend. As arriving passengers emerged from customs, they were greeted by roaring crowds assuring them that everybody, including those who are Muslim, are welcome in this country.

# All About Something

January 6, 2017

Trump’s ban on immigration from selected Muslim countries has been put on hold by the courts. More than fifty challenges to the ban have been lodged. They have ranged geographically from Boston to Hawaii. The most significant ban comes from a federal Seattle judge (appointed by George W. Bush) who put the ban on hold nationwide. The case has been appealed to the Ninth Circuit.

The Ninth Circuit three-judge panel has set oral arguments for the travel ban case for tomorrow at 3pm PST. It also denied the state of Hawai'i's motion to intervene to join Washington and Minnesota, but granted Hawai'i the right to file an amicus ("friend of the court") brief.

California Attorney General Bacerra and attorney generals from 14 other states and the District of Columbia filed amici briefs against the travel ban. On Sunday, 97 companies filed an amicus brief supporting the ruling of district court judge James Robart's temporary restraining order. Apple, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Levi Strauss and yogurt company Chobani. Many of these companies were founded by immigrants. Google was co-founded by a refugee from the Soviet Union.

However the courts rule this week, it is expected that the case will eventually go to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is quite likely that Neil Gorsuch, if eventually approved by the U.S. Senate, will not be on the Court in time to hear this case. Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Charles Grassley has laid out a **six-week plan** for the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee.

The temporary travel ban expires in 120 days.

If the Supreme Court arrives at a 4-4 split, the 9th Circuit's decision will be the official law of the land.

When a new justice of the Supreme Court finally is sworn in, what will it mean for the rule of law in the United States? President Trump appears to only believe in the rule of the President. Congress may bend over to help Trump - something that often happens with regimes with authoritarian heads. The Congress may have loyalty to the President as opposed to working for the benefit of the people of the United States - and the rest of the world. It seems quite likely that Bannon, the most fanatic of his advisors, ends up making the policies for the country.

Although some Republicans have been, at times, openly critical of Trump when he separates himself from them on issues like national security, they appear willing to accept the way he runs the country via twitters after watching cable television at night. They may not like that he criticizes and ridicules judges, but they still seem willing to go along with even his most outlandish executive orders.

And so it goes.

# Trump Executive Orders

As of February 10, 2017, President Trump has signed orders, actions and memoranda on a variety of issues related to promises he made in his campaign for the presidency. Most of these have not yet been implemented as the details become more specific.

President Donald J. Trump:

1. Ordered the Secretary of the Treasury to review the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial regulatory law.
2. Signed an executive order imposing a 120-day suspension of the refugee program and a 90-day ban on travel to the U.S. from citizens of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan.
3. Signed a notice that the United States would begin a withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal.
4. Signed an order to federal agencies directing them to ease what he considers the "regulatory burdens" of Obamacare. The order directs agencies to "waive, defer, grant exemptions from, or delay the implementation of any provision or requirement" of ObamaCare that imposes a "fiscal burden on any State or a cost, fee, tax, penalty, or regulatory burden on individuals, families, healthcare providers, health insurers, patients, recipients of healthcare services, purchasers of health insurance, or makers of medical devices, products, or medications."
5. Signed a memorandum that restructures the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council
6. Issued an order authorizing the building of a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border

Signed an executive order to build new planes, new ships and other military resources

Signed an executive order calling for “extreme” ideological screening tests for new immigrants and suspended the U.S. Syrian refugees program.

1. Signed a memorandum telling the Department of Labor to delay implementing President Obama’s order that required financial professionals who are giving advice on retirement, and who charge commissions, to put their client's interests first.
2. Signed an order telling agencies that if they introduce a regulation, they must first delete two regulations.
3. Signed a memorandum that directed the Secretary of Defense to draw up a plan within 30 days to defeat ISIS.
4. Signed an executive order to Attorney General Sessions to develop a Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety which is to develop "strategies to reduce crime, including, in particular, illegal immigration, drug trafficking and violent crime," propose new legislation, and submit at least one report to the President within the next year.
5. Signed an executive order directing the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security to “undertake all necessary and lawful action to break the back of the criminal cartels that have spread across our nation and are destroying the blood of our youth and other people,"
6. Signed an executive order directing the Justice Department to prosecute, using existing federal laws, those who commit crimes against law enforcement officers.
7. Signed an order that would extend the number of years administration officials may not become lobbyists for foreign governments beyond the current 5-year ban.
8. Issued an order that would take away federal grant money going to sanctuary cities
9. Issued an order for the hiring of 5,000 new Border Patrol agents
10. Issued an order ending so-called “catch-and-release” policies for immigrants in the country without papers
11. Issued an order designed to reinstate local and state immigration enforcement “partnerships”
12. Issued a memorandum calling for a 30-day review of military readiness.
13. Issued orders that would allow for the Keystone XL pipeline and Dakota Access pipelines.
14. Signed an order that he hoped would make the environmental permitting process for infrastructure projects related to the pipelines faster
15. Signed an order directing the Department of Commerce to make the manufacturing permitting process easier for companies to satisfy
16. Ordered the Department of Commerce to develop policy within 180 days that would maximize the use of U.S. steel in the pipeline.
17. Signed an order that would reinstate a ban on federal funds to international groups that perform abortions or lobby to legalize or promote abortion.
18. Signed an order to impose a hiring freeze on the number of government workers (except for those working for the military).

On May 11th   Trump signed an executive order targeting **national cybersecurity.** The order is just a **first step** in fulfilling Trump’s promise to address national cybersecurity concerns. The order sets up three priorities for cybersecurity for the United States: **(1) protecting federal networks, (2) reinforcing critical IT infrastructure, and (3) protecting the American public in the online space.**

# Trump Threatens the Judicial System

Trump is not-so-subtly threatening the judicial system, and even his Supreme Court nominee is upset

By Aaron Blake February 8, 2017

In a speech to law enforcement officials, Feb. 8, President Trump read federal law giving broad him broad authority to set immigration restrictions, adding, "a bad high school student would understand this." (The Washington Post)

Among those feeling threatened by Trump's comments is apparently his Supreme Court nominee, **Neil Gorsuch**. Gorsuch told Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) on Wednesday that Trump's comments are "disheartening" and "demoralizing" to the **independence of the judiciary**. Blumenthal relayed Gorsuch's comments to reporters, and a Gorsuch spokesman confirmed them.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit is now weighing what to do with President Trump's travel ban. And Trump did his best Wednesday to put his thumb on the scales of justice.

Continuing a highly unusual days-long effort by a president, Trump issued a stark warning to the three-judge panel and, really, the entire court system: Run afoul of me, and you may just pay a price.

In a speech in front of law enforcement officials in Washington, Trump suggested to the three judges that they would **marginalize themselves politically** if they decide the wrong way. Trump has said similar things about the judge who previously halted his travel ban — albeit after the decision had come down.

The comments were oblique, but Trump's point was crystal clear.

“**If these judges wanted to help the court in terms of respect for the court, they’d do what they should be doing**,” Trump said, in a comment thick with subtext. “It’s so sad.”

He added: “I don’t ever want to call a court biased, so I won’t call it biased. But courts seem to be so political, and it would be so great for our justice system if they would read [the law] and do what’s right.”

If that isn't a threat to marshal support against the American court system and fight it politically, I'm not sure what is. Trump is basically saying: That's a nice reputation you've got there. It'd be a shame if something happened to it.

Trump has been dancing around this idea ever since the first judge halted his executive order on Friday. In tweets spaced out over the weekend, he asserted that the judge was overstepping his authority and suggested any future attacks might be laid at his — and other judges' — feet.

Some tweets were targeted at the judge personally. But others, tellingly, addressed the “the courts” and “the court system” as an entity.

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially **takes law-enforcement away from our country**, is ridiculous and will be overturned!

5:12 AM - 4 Feb 2017

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

What is our country coming to when a judge can halt a Homeland Security travel ban and anyone, even with bad intentions, can come into U.S.?

12:44 PM - 4 Feb 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

I have instructed Homeland Security to check people coming into our country VERY CAREFULLY. **The courts are making the job very difficult**!

12:42 PM - 5 Feb 2017

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump

Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril. If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!

12:39 PM - 5 Feb 2017

“If something happens blame him and court system.” “The courts are making the job very difficult.” Trump's ire isn't just directed at the judges directly involved in his case; he seems to be girding for a showdown with other judges who might dare to try to rein in his executive power.

I wrote about this potential showdown over the weekend:

It's something experts on executive authority have been chewing over. Given Trump's populist campaign, admiration for authoritarian leaders and expressed skepticism toward the political establishment, some think it's possible he takes on the judicial establishment, too.

“They're spoiling for a fight, and that’s what populists do,” said Daniel P. Franklin, a professor at Georgia State University. “And I think that’s the way it plays out — maybe not on this issue, but on something.”

That piece dealt with the possibility that Trump **might actually take this to its extreme and ignore what the court tells him to do.** But he can do plenty before he goes that far to try to undermine the judiciary and send a message. Even if he doesn't intend to force a legal showdown over its authority, comments like the ones Trump made Wednesday at the very least seem geared toward “working the refs” — i.e., sending a message that judges, who are supposed to be apolitical, won't be immune from his political wrath. And when they issue a decision he doesn't like, Trump is saying, they're going to pay the same price as a senator who votes the wrong way on a bill.

This is something that's troubling to those who would prefer to keep politics out of the judiciary. But as with many other political norms, Trump is increasingly taking a hacksaw to this one.

Aaron Blake is senior political reporter for The Fix. Follow @aaronblake

# Robert Reich on “repeal” and “replace”

Don’t be fooled by Trump’s and Republican promises to “repeal and replace” Obamacare. They could repeal it, but they can’t and won’t replace it. They’ve tried for years to come up with a replacement that keeps at least as many people covered. Their “replacement” never appears.

So why do Republicans want to repeal Obamacare and leave millions without insurance? Because it would mean a **huge tax windfall for the wealthy**.

Repealing Obamacare will put an average of $33,000 of tax cuts in the hands of the richest 1 percent this year alone, and a whopping $197,000 of tax cuts into the hands of the top 0.1 percent.

The 400 highest-income taxpayers (with incomes averaging more than $300 million each) will each receive an average annual tax cut of about $7 million.

It would also **increase the taxes** of families earning between $10,000 and $75,000 – including just about all of Trump’s working class voters.

So what do we end up with when Republicans repeal Obamacare?

32 million people losing their health insurance,

tens of thousands of Americans dying because they don’t get the medical care they need,

Medicare in worse shape,

And the rich becoming far richer.

This is lunacy. We must stand up to it.

Robert Reich

# 17 Universities Join N.Y. Legal Challenge to Trump Immigration Ban

February 13, 2017 by Alex Arriaga

The Chronicle of Higher Education

Seventeen universities filed a brief on Monday supporting a court challenge to President Trump’s executive order on immigration.

“While the executive order is currently limited to seven countries, its damaging effects have already been widely felt by American universities,” the amicus brief says. “When the executive order went into effect, the 90-day suspension of entry left some of amici’s students, faculty, and scholars stranded abroad, while others were unable to leave the United States to travel to their home countries or elsewhere for field research, academic meetings, and family and personal obligations.”

The brief was filed in a civil action sought by New York’s attorney general and others in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. The order itself has been stayed pending the resolution of another case challenging the travel ban, out of Washington State.

The **universities joining the supporting brief** are Brown University, Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Emory University, Harvard University, the Johns Hopkins University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, Vanderbilt University, and Yale University.

# Feb. 17 Week in Review

**TrumpBeat**,

FiveThirtyEight’s weekly feature looking at how developments in Washington affect people in the real world.

February 17, 2017

President Trump’s **rambling, combative press conference** on Thursday was a microcosm of the first month of his administration. It covered an impossibly long list of topics: health care, taxes, the travel ban, the media and (oh, right) the supposed reason he was holding the press conference in the first place — the nomination of a new labor secretary. It was light on policy details and heavy on theatrics and included the occasional outright falsehood — Trump at one point claimed that his victory in the Electoral College was the largest since Ronald Reagan, **which isn’t true**. And it provided a camera-ready distraction from the biggest news of the week: the resignation of National Security Adviser **Mike Flynn** amid accusations of improper contacts with Russia.

But the Flynn news was itself a distraction of sorts. Not that it wasn’t important — it clearly was — but it diverted attention from lots of other news that would have, in calmer times, drawn more scrutiny. Last week, for example, the government conducted immigration raids in cities across the country. Over the weekend, North Korea fired a ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan, drawing a comparatively muted response from Trump. And on Wednesday Trump appeared to break with the U.S.’s longstanding commitment to a “**two-state solution**” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All those stories drew news coverage, but less than they probably would have gotten if the Flynn news (and ensuing discussion of the White House’s ties to Russia) hadn’t sucked the oxygen out of the room.

This is the challenge that the frenetic opening weeks of the Trump administration had posed for the media, and for citizens more generally: **How can we pay attention to the news of the day without losing track of everything else that is happening**? How can we distinguish between fact and rumor, especially given the White House’s apparent willingness to mislead? (Trump adviser **Kellyanne Conway** said Flynn had the “full confidence” of the president just hours before Flynn resigned.) And how can we keep the developments in perspective when even comparatively normal developments are labeled “unprecedented” by Trump’s critics?

None of these questions has easy answers. It’s possible that the deluge of news will eventually slow enough to let people catch their breath. In the meantime, we’re trying to keep our focus on major policy developments. Here are some from the past week:

The Cabinet: A safer choice

**Andrew Puzder**’s nomination for labor secretary finally crumbled this week under pressure from scandal and controversy. Trump seems to want to avoid a repeat performance with Puzder’s replacement: When he announced his nomination of law school dean **Alexander Acosta** on Thursday, Trump made a point of noting that the former prosecutor has previously been confirmed by the Senate three times.

Trump would have been hard-pressed to pick a candidate who offered a sharper contrast with his initial nominee. Puzder is a fast-food executive with no previous experience in government. Acosta has spent years in the public sector: He was named to the National Labor Relations Board in 2002 and later served as assistant attorney general in the U.S. Justice Department’s civil rights division and as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida. He is currently dean of the Florida International University law school.

Acosta has a much lower political profile than Puzder, who had made public — and often controversial — statements on the minimum wage, the Affordable Care Act and other issues. (Puzder also once favored a path to legal status for undocumented immigrants, an awkward fit for Trump’s “America first” agenda.) As a U.S. attorney, Acosta worked on high-profile cases, including the prosecution of lobbyist Jack Abramoff. But he appears to have little record of public positions on the issues that he would handle as labor secretary.

It is hard to know whether Acosta will be as different from Puzder on policy as he is in experience. Acosta has solid Republican credentials: His government experience came in the George W. Bush administration, and he served as a clerk for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito when Alito was an appellate judge. Still, the labor groups that helped lead the opposition to Puzder had a much milder response to Acosta. In a statement Thursday, a spokeswoman for the “Fight for $15” minimum-wage movement said the group “look[ed] forward to learning more” about Acosta’s record.

The economy: All talk, no action

**Steve Mnuchin** was finally sworn in as treasury secretary on Monday, Trump’s 25th day in office. That’s by far the longest it has ever taken to confirm a new president’s treasury secretary, going all the way back to 1789, when George Washington nominated the $10 founding father himself, Alexander Hamilton.

With Mnuchin now in office, maybe the Trump administration will move more quickly to enact the president’s economic agenda. The first few weeks of the Trump presidency have featured **lots of talk about the economy** — meetings with CEOs, Twitter boasts about the stock market, unspecific (and possibly contradictory) proposals for a new border tax — but relatively little action. Trump formally withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the fourth day of his term, and he has issued a couple of vaguely worded executive orders aimed at reducing regulation on the manufacturing and finance industries. But he hasn’t provided any details about the major economic proposals he discussed during the campaign, such as overhauling the tax code, renegotiating trade deals or investing in infrastructure. And he still hasn’t appointed a chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, a position he also demoted from his Cabinet.

Then again, the economy seems to be doing pretty well without Trump’s help. New data on retail spending and manufacturing output this week pointed to a strong start to 2017. The job market is in fundamentally solid shape. And major stock indexes are at or near all-time highs. Some Federal Reserve policymakers even worry that the economy could be at risk of overheating: Outgoing Atlanta Fed President Dennis Lockhart this week became the latest official to suggest that the central bank will need to raise interest rates earlier than expected in order to keep a lid on inflation. Many liberal economists and activists disagree — they would like to see the Fed keep rates low to spur more wage growth — but even the hint that the economy is growing “too fast” is an encouraging sign after years of disappointing progress.

Health care: **But what about the insurers**?

Trump may be trying to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, but his administration this week took some steps aimed at keeping the law’s insurance marketplaces operating until the replacement is ready. (In his press conference Thursday, Trump said he hopes to have a replacement bill ready by early March, but even if he meets that deadline, the GOP has indicated that it will be some time before a new law is enacted.) The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on Wednesday announced a new rule to try to prop up the marketplaces, but the changes are largely symbolic — the main goal seems to be to convince insurers to keep selling health plans through the marketplaces next year.

The ACA marketplaces have had trouble in recent years, with insurers dropping out and premiums increasing dramatically in some areas. Many health policy experts believed that marketplaces had begun to stabilize — until Trump won the presidency, paving a way for the repeal of the law. The mere threat of repeal has already destabilized the law — a drop in expected marketplace enrollment, attributed to actions of the Trump White House, probably means there are fewer young and healthy enrollees, a group important to the health of the marketplace.

The new rule is essentially a list of items the insurance industry says it needs to keep the system functional. Some changes make it harder for people to buy insurance outside of the annual open enrollment period, to prevent people from buying a plan when they need care and dropping it when they are healthy. Other changes will likely **increase out-of-pocket costs for many buyers, shifting the costs away from the industry**.

It’s unclear whether that will work. The day before the rule change, Humana announced that it won’t sell insurance on the ACA marketplaces in 2018. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, the 156 counties where the insurance giant sold coverage in 2017 included 16 in Tennessee where Humana was the only insurer selling on the ACA marketplace. Unless other companies step in to fill the void, around 50,000 people in Tennessee will lose the ability to buy federally subsidized insurance, said Cynthia Cox, who studies health reform and private insurance for Kaiser. Markets in an additional 60 counties in five states could be left with just one insurer.

Humana is one of the country’s biggest insurers, so its decision to withdraw from the marketplaces drew headlines. But it’s a different set of insurers that might make or break marketplaces, Cox said. Companies such as Molina Healthcare and Centene — smaller, less-well-known companies that have long focused on insuring low-income individuals — have done well under the ACA, bolstered by an increase in Medicaid patients, and have been key in states where the markets are most precarious. Molina announced on Wednesday that it lost $110 million in its ACA business in the final quarter of 2016. The company’s CEO said he needed to wait and see what Congress and the White House have planned for the marketplaces before he could commit to 2018.

# Chaos in the Whitehouse

Washington Officials Say They've Never Seen Anything Like the Chaos and Ineptitude of Trump's White House

By David Smith, Ben Jacobs / The Guardian February 18, 2017

When press officers at the White House glance up from their desks, they are constantly reminded of their boss’s big day. On the wall, in thick dark frames, are photos: Donald Trump taking the oath of office, giving a thumbs up at his inaugural address, bidding farewell to Barack Obama, waving to the crowd during his inaugural parade, dancing with his wife at an inaugural ball.

Walking by last Monday, Trump gestured toward an image of his inauguration crowd—a point that still irks him—and told reporters there would soon be an official statement about the future of his national security adviser, **Michael Flynn**.

Trouble was, an hour earlier, adviser **Kellyanne Conway** had appeared on television declaring that the president had “full confidence” in Flynn. Soon after, Trump’s press secretary **Sean Spicer** read a statement that said “the president is evaluating the situation”. Six hours later, Flynn was gone.

It was the fastest, most furious week yet for an administration that, like a runaway train, has Washington and America’s elder statesmen shaking their heads, declaring that **they have never seen such turmoil or ineptitude**.

“Our government continues to be in unbelievable turmoil,” Gen Tony Thomas, head of the military’s special operations command, told a conference last week. “I hope they sort it out soon because we’re a nation at war.”

Some of the malaise can be attributed to the growing pains that plague any new administration. Some is said to be down to the factional struggles, imported to the White House from Trump’s businesses. And much is believed to be on the shoulders of the **capricious, egocentric, volatile president, the first in US history to have been elected with no political or military experience.**

Yet both Trump and his supporters deny the dysfunction, pointing to executive orders, a supreme court nomination and the scrapping of a Pacific trade deal at breakneck speed.

“Don’t believe the main stream (fake news) media,” Trump tweeted Saturday morning. “The White House is running VERY WELL. **I inherited a MESS and am in the process of fixing it.”**

Sleeping just four or five hours a night, Trump’s manic pace has made the world’s head spin. He had an angry phone call with the prime minister of **Australia**, a Twitter spat that convinced the president of **Mexico** to cancel a meeting, and consulted the prime minister of **Japan** about a North Korean missile launch in full view of dinner guests at his Florida country club, Mar-a-Lago. He approved, over dinner, a commando raid in **Yemen** that resulted in the death of a Navy Seal and an eight-year-old girl.

At home, he was caught on live television making a false claim about his electoral victory, press releases have been littered with **spelling mistakes**, and the president has fought Twitter battles with everyone from senators to Arnold Schwarzenegger to a department store that dropped his daughter’s products.

Then there were the White House contradictions around the abrupt departure of Flynn, who misled the vice-president over his conversations with the Russian ambassador. Then Trump’s pick for labour secretary, **Andrew Puzder**, withdrew his nomination after facing questions over his personal background and business record.

Not even in his fourth week, there was the president’s **ban on travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries**, an order widely denounced and sowing disarray and demonstrations at airports. Trump sacked his acting attorney general for refusing to defend the ban, attacked the courts for pausing it to weigh its lawfulness, and insisted this week that it was “a very smooth rollout”.

“This administration is **running like a fine-tuned machine**,” he said at a rambling, impromptu press conference.

That characterisation has provoked scorn. “From what I can tell, it’s non-functional,” said Rick Tyler, a political analyst. “It’s not firing on all cylinders, and the timing is off, and the transmission won’t engage.

The executive order, Tyler noted, “created havoc and turmoil. The communications team are incoherent, inconsistent and contradictory to what the president says.”

Bob Shrum, a Democratic consultant and strategist, called the president’s defenses “preposterous”. “It’s like a car where none of the gears work and you’ve no idea if you’re going at 90mph or 30mph and you’re just careening. It doesn’t remotely compare with anything I can think of. There’s never been anything like this.”

One Republican with ties to the White House blamed growing pains, from Trump’s lean campaign to the staff of the federal bureaucracy.

The Trump administration has also decided to vet for any criticism of the president during the campaign. On Thursday, a political appointee at the Department of Housing and Urban Development was fired after it was noticed that he had written a critical opinion column about Trump in October.

But operations have also been hampered by **competing interests and seething mutual suspicion**. Media reports describe paranoid staff using a secret chat app that erases messages as soon as they are read. Trump’s inner circle includes **Conway**; chief of staff **Reince Priebus**; senior advisers **Jared Kushner**, 36, (Trump’s son-in-law) and **Stephen Miller**, 31; and chief strategist **Stephen Bannon**, the former Goldman Sachs executive who has likened himself to Thomas Cromwell in the court of Henry VIII.

Senator **John McCain**, the Republican nominee for president in 2008, told reporters this week that “whole environment is one of dysfunction in the Trump administration”.

“Who’s making the decisions in the White House? Is it the 31-year-old? Is it Mr Bannon? Is it the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff? I don’t know.”

The default answer could still be Priebus who, as chief of staff, would traditionally act as gatekeeper to Trump. But his boss is anything but traditional, and Priebus’s establishment influence is countered by two ideologues, Bannon and Miller. Bannon, previously head of the rightwing Breitbart News, has been described by Democrats as a white nationalist and is seen by many as the true power behind the throne.

Last week Bannon and Priebus gave a joint media interview to deny rumours of a rift. But Tyler said: “There’s no clear chain of command. They can’t tell who’s in charge.

Were the chief of staff in control, Tyler said, Priebus would have fired Flynn. “If Priebus and Bannon are doing PR to show how well they got on, that shows Priebus is losing. He is the chief of staff, so he shouldn’t need to say he’s meeting with Bannon, who ought to be a subordinate.”

Bannon’s allies, meanwhile, continue to rise in prominence. **Sebastian Gorka**, a deputy assistant and former editor for Breitbart, has become a vocal surrogate in a series of TV and radio interviews, telling the BBC this weekthat Trump’s press conference performance was “fabulous”.

Miller, too, earned Trump’s praise and widespread scorn for his zealous defense of the president and for peddling a baseless claim about phantom illegal voting. “He says things that would make movie villains blush,” Tyler said. “You could not script this stuff.”

The problems have been amplified by Senate Democrats doing their utmost to drag out the confirmation process on many of Trump cabinet choices, leaving many executive agencies with few senior staffers.

Trump is not the first president to hit early turbulence, and Bill Galston, a former adviser to Bill Clinton, recalled that “hardly anyone” of the new president’s staff in 1993 had been in the White House before.

“That created all sorts of problems. The simple fact of not knowing how the machinery operates is already a huge problem.”

Before too long, he said, Clinton recruited Hill veteran Leon Panetta and David Gergen, who had worked with the administrations of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan.

“You need people there who know how overwhelming it is to be in the White House with ‘incoming’ coming at you from all directions,” Galston said. “You need to have a sense of all pieces of the government. It’s not as harmonious as conducting an orchestra. It’s like juggling knives and swords.”

But Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution thinktank, acknowledged that the Trump administration is not normal. “I’ve consulted many people in town about analogies and comparisons and nobody can come up with any. Our seismographs are broken.

“We appear to have a president who cannot distinguish chaos from order,” he continued. “There are amateurs doing a job that only professionals can do, and even then often not successfully.”

In contrast, Trump’s allies contend that, for a non-politician learning on the job, he is doing well and playing the media like a fiddle.

“It’s like the beginning of any administration,” said **Christopher Nixon Cox**, who is well acquainted with Bannon and other members of Trump’s inner circle. He compared Trump’s first month to Clinton’s, observing that critics also called those weeks “a disaster”.

“Every administration has its palace intrigues,” Nixon Cox said. “It’s hard to say he has any more or less. Given that we have social media and he’s a social media president, it could be we’re just more aware of what used to be kept behind closed doors. There will be good days and bad days but it’s way too early to say it’s going to go off the rails.”

Cox, a financial adviser and grandson of Richard Nixon, added: “Fundamentally he’s going to be judged on the economy and whether he keeps peace around the world. I think it’s going to be a big success. **We have to give him time**.”

Tom Stewart, a member of Trump’s national security advisory council during the campaign, said that the president was “cunningly” manipulating the media, so that “his strong cabinet will have a chance to make some meaningful reforms.”

**Grover Norquist**, president of Americans for Tax Reform, said Republicans are making good progress on their conservative agenda. “The press and a lot of observers in Washington DC like to stop and look at a car accident and they miss that the traffic is continuing to drive past at 50mph,” he said. “Things are moving forward, largely on track.”

Nevertheless, as Trump enters his second month, there will be many praying for a steadier hand and fewer tweets ending with exclamation marks.

“This can’t just stand,” said Rich Galen, former press secretary to the 44th vice-president, Dan Quayle. “It was kind of fun in the beginning watching the kids run around and bump into each other. Now they’ve got the keys to the car and it’s dangerous. Someone has to go in and get their arms around this.”

David Smith is the Guardian's Washington correspondent.

# Sessions Lied

Jeff Sessions did not disclose meetings with Russian ambassador during Trump campaign

Sabrina Siddiqui in Washington

The Guardian

Thursday 2 March 2017

Donald Trump’s attorney general Jeff Sessions twice spoke with the Russian ambassador to the United States during the presidential campaign.

The Washington Post, citing justice department officials, first reported that Sessions met with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak once in September 2016, when US intelligence officials were investigating Russian interference in the presidential election, and once in the summer of that year.

It was communications with Kislyak that led to the firing of Trump’s first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, in February.

A spokeswoman for Sessions confirmed that the meetings took place, but provided a statement from the attorney general saying **they were not related to the election campaign**.

“*I never met with any Russian officials to discuss issues of the campaign*,” Sessions’ statement said. “*I have no idea what this allegation is about. It is false*.”

Sessions reiterated on Thursday morning that he had “not met with any Russians at any time to discuss any political campaign”, in an interview with MSNBC’s Morning Joe.

Sessions, a former senator from Alabama who was among Trump’s early and most vocal surrogates on the campaign trail, did not disclose the conversations when asked under oath during his Senate confirmation hearing in early 2017 about possible contacts between Trump’s campaign and Moscow.

Nancy Pelosi, the House Democratic leader, called for Sessions’ **resignation**. “After lying under oath to Congress about his own communications with the Russians, the attorney general must resign,” she said.

“Sessions is not fit to serve as the top law enforcement officer of our country and must resign. There must be an independent, bipartisan, outside commission to investigate the Trump political, personal and financial connections to the Russians.”

The White House swiftly rejected the reports as an effort to undermine Trump’s speech before Congress on Tuesday night, which was reviewed favourably by the US media despite signalling no substantive shift in policy.

“This is the latest attack against the Trump administration by partisan Democrats,” a senior administration official said, according to CNN.

“*Sessions met with the ambassador in an official capacity as a member of the Senate armed services committee, which is entirely consistent with his testimony*.”

When Sessions was asked during his 10 January testimony to the Senate judiciary committee how he would respond if he learned of communications between the Trump campaign and Russian officials leading up to the election, he said he was “*not aware of any of those activities*”.

He added: “*I have been called a surrogate at a time or two in that campaign and I did not have communications with the Russians*.”

While the committee was considering his nomination, the panel’s top Democrat, Senator Patrick Leahy, also raised the issue of communications with Russia in a written questionnaire.

“*Several of the president-elect’s nominees or senior advisers have Russian ties*,” Leahy wrote, before asking Sessions point-blank: “*Have you been in contact with anyone connected to any part of the Russian government about the 2016 election, either before or after election day?*”

“No,” Sessions responded.

Sarah Isgur Flores, a spokeswoman for Sessions, denied he had deceived the Senate. “*There was absolutely nothing misleading about his answer*,” Flores said in a statement, noting Sessions had over 25 conversations with foreign ambassadors last year.

“*He was asked during the hearing about communications between Russia and the Trump campaign – not about meetings he took as a senator and a member of the armed services committee*.”

The Washington Post said it had asked all 26 members of the committee whether they had met Kislyak last year. None of the 20 who replied, including committee chair John McCain, had done so, it reported.

Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, called for Sessions to **recuse** himself from any investigation into contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia.

“*If reports are accurate that Attorney General Sessions – a prominent surrogate for Donald Trump – met with Ambassador Kislyak during the campaign, and failed to disclose this fact during his confirmation, it is essential that he recuse himself from any role in the investigation of Trump campaign ties to the Russians*,” Schiff said.

“*This is not even a close call; it is a must*.”

Asked by MSBNC on Thursday whether he would recuse himself from any investigations, Sessions said: “*Well I have said whenever it is appropriate I will recuse myself, there’s no doubt about that*.”

Elijah Cummings, the ranking Democrat on the House oversight committee, issued a statement calling for Sessions’ “immediate” resignation.

“*It is inconceivable that even after Michael Flynn was fired for concealing his conversations with the Russians that Attorney General Sessions would keep his own conversations secret for several more weeks*,” Cummings said, adding Sessions’ testimony was “**demonstrably false**”.

“*Yet he let it stand for weeks – and he continued to let it stand even as he watched the president tell the entire nation he didn’t know anything about anyone advising his campaign talking to the Russians*.”

The revelation comes just two weeks after the resignation of Michael Flynn, who served as Trump’s national security advisor until it was revealed he discussed US sanctions against Russia with Kislyak in December and misled Vice-president Mike Pence about the nature of his communications.

As the new attorney general, Sessions will have significant oversight of an investigation by the FBI into Russia’s role in the US election and any links to associates of Trump. The Senate and House intelligence committees are each conducting their own separate inquiries into the matter.

**Senator Lindsey Graham**, a Republican from South Carolina, said Sessions should recuse himself from the FBI investigation.

“*If there is something there, and it goes up the chain of investigation, it is clear to me that Jeff Sessions, who is my dear friend, cannot make this decision about Trump*,” Graham said during a joint CNN townhall with Arizona Senator John McCain late on Wednesday.

Most Republicans have resisted calls to have an independent, select panel investigation the issue, arguing that the intelligence committees can be trusted to oversee the inquiries that were launched shortly after US officials accused Russia of meddling in the American election. But Democrats have called into question whether Trump’s own party, which controls both chambers of Congress, will conduct a fair and thorough investigation.

Minnesota Senator Al Franken, the Democrat who raised the issue of possible ties between Trump’s campaign and the Russians in Sessions’ confirmation hearing, also called on the attorney general to recuse himself from any ongoing investigation.

Franken said: “*I am very troubled that his response to my questioning during his confirmation hearing was, at best, misleading*.

“*The American people deserve to know the truth about what happened between Russia and the Trump team … It’s clearer than ever now that the attorney general cannot, in good faith, oversee an investigation at the department of justice and the FBI of the Trump-Russia connection, and he must recuse himself immediately*.”

Trump’s friendly posture toward Russia has sounded alarms across the US and frequently proved a source of consternation among members of his own party.

The president has routinely praised his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. Following his victory in November, Trump nominated Rex Tillerson as his secretary of state – a former CEO of ExxonMobil with close ties to Russia.

Trump’s administration has also refused to categorically rule out lifting sanctions imposed against Russia by the Obama administration, prompting bipartisan efforts to ratify those sanctions into law.

# The First 100 Lies

The Trump Team’s Flurry Of Falsehoods

The president and his aides succeeded in reaching the mark in just 36 days.

By Igor Bobic

February 26, 2017

Huffington Post

To say that President Donald Trump has a casual relationship with the truth would be a gross understatement. He has repeatedly cited debunked conspiracy theories, pushed voter fraud myths, and embellished his record and accomplishments. The barrage of falsehoods has been so furious that journalists have taken to issuing instant fact-checks during press conferences and calling out false statements during cable news broadcasts.

All presidents lie, but lying so brazenly and so frequently about even silly factoids like his golf game has put Trump in his own category. His disregard for the truth is reflected in his top aides, who have inflated easily disproved figures like the attendance at his inauguration and even cited terror attacks that never happened.

The Huffington Post tracked the public remarks of Trump and his aides to compile a list of 100 incidents of egregious falsehoods. Still, it is likely the administration has made dozens of other misleading and exaggerated claims.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer falsely claimed the crowd on the National Mall was “largest audience to ever witness an inauguration.” (Jan. 21)

Trump falsely claimed that the crowd for his swearing-in stretched down the National Mall to the Washington Monument and totaled more than 1 million people. (Jan. 21)

As Trump fondly recalled his Inauguration Day, he said it stopped raining “immediately” when he began his speech. A light rain continued to fall throughout the address. (Jan. 21)

During his speech at CIA headquarters, Trump claimed the media made up his feud with the agency. In fact, he started it by comparing the intelligence community to “Nazi Germany.” (Jan. 21)

During his speech at CIA headquarters, Trump repeated the claim that he “didn’t want to go into Iraq.” He told Howard Stern in 2002 that he supported the Iraq War. (Jan. 21)

During his speech at CIA headquarters, Trump said he had the “all-time record in the history of Time Magazine. … I’ve been on it for 15 times this year.” Trump had been featured on the magazine a total of 11 times. (Jan. 21)

Trump claimed that his inauguration drew 11 million more viewers than Barack Obama’s in 2013. It didn’t, and viewership for Obama’s first inauguration, in 2009, was even higher. (Jan. 22)

Spicer said during his first press briefing that there has been a “dramatic expansion of the federal workforce in recent years.” This is false. (Jan. 23)

While pushing back against the notion of a rift between the CIA and Trump, Spicer claimed the president had received a “five-minute standing ovation” at the agency’s headquarters. He did not. The attendees were also never asked to sit down. (Jan. 23)

Spicer claimed that “tens of millions of people” watched the inauguration online. In fact, about 4.6 million did. (Jan. 23)

Trump told CBN News that 84 percent Cuban-Americans voted for him. It’s not clear where Trump got that number. According to the Pew Research Center, 54 percent of Cuban-Americans in Florida voted for him. (Jan. 23)

While meeting with congressional leaders, Trump repeated a debunked claim that he only lost the national popular vote because of widespread voter fraud. (Jan. 24)

In remarks with business leaders at the White House, Trump said, “I’m a very big person when it comes to the environment. I have received awards on the environment.” There is no evidence that Trump has received such awards. (Jan. 24)

In signing an executive memo ordering the construction of the Keystone pipeline, Trump said the project would create 28,000 construction jobs. According to The Washington Post Fact Checker, the pipeline would create an estimated 16,000 jobs, most of which are not construction jobs. (Jan. 25)

Spicer said in a press briefing that Trump received more electoral votes than any Republican since Ronald Reagan. George H.W. Bush won 426 electoral votes in 1988, more than Trump’s 304. (Jan. 24)

In remarks he gave at the Homeland Security Department, Trump said Immigration and Customs Enforcement and border patrol agents “unanimously endorsed me for president.” That’s not true. (Jan. 25)

Spicer said during a press briefing that a draft executive order on CIA prisons was not a “White House document.” Citing three administration officials, The New York Times reported that the White House had circulated the draft order among national security staff members. (Jan. 25)

In an interview with ABC, Trump again claimed he “had the biggest audience in the history of inaugural speeches.” False. (Jan. 25)

Trump claimed during an interview with ABC that the applause he received at CIA headquarters “was the biggest standing ovation since Peyton Manning had won the Super Bowl.” It wasn’t even a standing ovation. (Jan. 25)

In an interview with ABC, Trump attacked the Affordable Care Act and said there are “millions of people that now aren’t insured anymore.” Twenty million people have gained health coverage because of the law so far. The estimated 2 million people who did not qualify under the law received waivers that kept the plans going until the end of 2017. (Jan. 25)

At the GOP retreat in Philadelphia, Trump claimed he and the president of Mexico “agreed” to cancel their scheduled meeting. Enrique Peña Nieto said he had decided to cancel it. (Jan. 26)

At the GOP retreat in Philadelphia, Trump said the national homicide rate was “horribly increasing.” It is down significantly. (Jan. 26)

On Twitter, Trump repeated his false claim that 3 million votes were illegal during the election. (Jan. 27)

In an interview on “Good Morning America,” Trump counselor Kellyanne Conway said Tiffany Trump, the president’s daughter, had told her she was “not registered to vote in two states.” A local election official confirmed to NBC News twice that the younger Trump indeed was. (Jan. 27)

Trump said he predicted the so-called “Brexit” when he was in Scotland the day before the vote. He was actually there the day after the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. (Jan. 27)

Trump claimed The New York Times lost subscribers “because their readers even like me.” The Times experienced a sharp uptick in subscribers after Election Day. (Jan. 27)

Trump claimed two people were fatally shot in Chicago during Obama’s last speech as president. That didn’t happen. (Jan. 27)

Trump claimed that under previous administrations, “if you were a Muslim you could come in, but if you were a Christian, it was almost impossible.” In fact, almost as many Christian refugees were admitted to the U.S. as Muslim refugees in fiscal year 2016. (Jan. 27)

Trump defended the swiftness of his immigration order on the grounds that terrorists would have rushed into the country if he had given the world a week’s notice. Even if terrorists wanted to infiltrate the refugee program or the visa program, they would have had to wait months or even years while being vetted to get into the country. (Jan. 30)

The White House maintained that Trump’s immigration order did not apply to green card holders and that was “the guidance from the beginning.” Initially, the White House said the order did include green card holders. (Jan. 30)

Trump said his immigration order was “similar to what President Obama did in 2011 when he banned visas for refugees from Iraq for six months.” Obama’s policy slowed resettlement of refugees from Iraq, but did not keep them from entering the country. Moreover, it flagged the seven countries included in Trump’s order as places the U.S. considered dangerous to visit. (Jan. 30)

Spicer said that “by and large,” Trump has been “praised” for his statement commemorating the Holocaust. Every major Jewish organization, including the Republican Jewish Coalition, criticized it for omitting any specific references to the Jewish people or anti-Semitism. (Jan. 30)

A Trump administration official called the implementation of Trump’s travel ban a “massive success story.” Not true ? young children, elderly people and U.S. green card holders were detained for hours. Some were deported upon landing in the U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) even criticized the rollout as “confusing.” (Jan. 30)

Spicer equated White House adviser Steve Bannon’s appointment to the National Security Council Principals Committee with Obama adviser David Axelrod attending meetings pertaining to foreign policy. Axelrod, however, never sat on the Principals Committee. (Jan. 30)

Spicer said people would have “flooded” into the country with advance notice of Trump’s immigration order. Not true. (Jan. 30)

Spicer insisted that only 109 travelers were detained because of Trump’s immigration order. More than 1,000 legal permanent residents had to get waivers before entering the U.S. An estimated 90,000 people in total were affected by the ban. (Jan. 30)

Trump tweeted the false claim that “only 109 people out of 325,000 were detained and held for questioning.” (Jan. 30)

Trump took credit for cutting $600 million from the F-35 program. But Lockheed Martin already had planned for the cost reductions for the next generation fighter plane. (Jan. 31)

Trump accused China of manipulating its currency by playing “the money market. They play the devaluation market, and we sit there like a bunch of dummies.” According to The Washington Post, the United States is no longer being hurt by China’s currency manipulation, and China is no longer devaluing its currency. (Jan. 31)

In defending the GOP’s blockade of Merrick Garland, Obama’s nominee to the Supreme Court, Spicer said no president had ever nominated a justice “so late” in his term. It previously happened three times. (Jan. 31)

Spicer repeatedly insisted during a press conference that Trump’s executive order on immigration was “not a ban.” During a Q&A event the night before, however, Spicer himself referred to the order as a “ban.” So did the president. (Jan. 31)

White House officials denied reports that Trump told Peña Nieto that U.S. forces would handle the “bad hombres down there” if the Mexican authorities don’t. It confirmed the conversation the next day, maintaining the remark was meant to be “lighthearted.” (Jan. 31)

Trump claimed that Delta, protesters and the tears of Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) were to blame for the problems over his travel ban. In fact, his administration was widely considered to blame for problems associated with its rollout. (Jan. 31)

Trump said the Obama administration “agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia.” The deal actually involved 1,250 refugees. (Feb. 1)

Trump said the U.S. “has the most generous immigration system in the world.” Not really. (Feb. 2)

Trump said the U.S. was giving Iran $150 billion for “nothing” under the Iranian nuclear deal. The money was already Iran’s to begin with, and the deal blocks Iran from building a nuclear bomb. (Feb. 2)

Spicer called a U.S. raid in Yemen “very, very well thought out and executed effort” and described it as a “successful operation by all standards.” U.S. military officials told Reuters the operation was approved “without sufficient intelligence, ground support, or adequate backup preparations.” (Feb. 2)

Spicer said that Iran had attacked a U.S. naval vessel, as part of his argument defending the administration’s bellicose announcement that Iran is “on notice.” In fact, a suspected Houthi rebel ship attacked a Saudi vessel. (Feb. 2)

In his meeting with union leaders at the White House, Trump claimed he won union households. He actually only won white union households. (Feb. 2)

Conway cited the “Bowling Green massacre” to defend Trump’s travel ban. It never happened. (Feb. 3)

Conway said citing the nonexistent “Bowling Green massacre” to defend Trump’s immigration order was an accidental “slip.” But she had mentioned it twice prior to that interview. (Feb. 3)

Trump approvingly shared a story on his official Facebook page which claimed that Kuwait issued a visa ban for five Muslim-majority countries. Kuwait issued a statement categorically denying it. (Feb. 3)

Trump claimed people are “pouring in” after his immigration order was temporarily suspended. Travelers and refugees cannot simply rush into the U.S. without extensive and lengthy vetting. (Feb. 5)

After a judge halted his immigration ban, Trump claimed that “anyone, even with bad intentions, can now come into the U.S.” Not true. (Feb. 5)

Spicer said nationwide protests of Trump are not like protests the tea party held, and called them “a very paid AstroTurf-type movement.” Although Democrats have capitalized on the backlash against Trump by organizing, the massive rallies across dozens of cities across the country ? which in some cases have been spontaneous ? suggests they are part of an organic phenomenon. (Feb. 6)

During an interview with Fox News before the Super Bowl, Trump repeated his debunked claim of widespread voter fraud during the presidential election. There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud. Republican and Democratic state officials have said so, as have Trump’s own campaign attorneys. (Feb. 6)

During an interview with Fox News before the Super Bowl, Trump repeated his false claim that he has “been against the war in Iraq from the beginning.” (Feb. 6)

Conway said she would not appear on CNN’s “State of the Union” because of “family” reasons. CNN, however, said the White House offered Conway as an alternative to Vice President Mike Pence and that the network had “passed” because of concerns about her “credibility.” (Feb. 6)

Spicer claimed CNN “retracted” its explanation of why it declined to take Conway for a Sunday show appearance. CNN said it never did so. (Feb. 6)

Trump cited attacks in Boston, Paris, Orlando, Florida, and Nice, France, as examples of terrorism the media has not covered adequately. “In many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn’t want to report it,” he said at CENTCOM. Those attacks garnered wall-to-wall television coverage, as well as thousands of news articles in print and online. (Feb. 6)

The White House released a more expansive list of terrorist attacks it believed “did not receive adequate attention from Western media sources.” Again, the list includes attacks that were widely covered by the media. (Feb. 6)

Trump said sanctuary cities “breed crime.” FBI data indicates that crime in sanctuary cities is generally lower than in nonsanctuary cities. (Feb. 6)

Trump claimed The New York Times was “forced to apologize to its subscribers for the poor reporting it did on my election win.” The paper has not issued such an apology. (Feb. 6)

Trump claimed the murder rate is the highest it’s been in 47 years. The murder rate rose 10.8 percent across the United States in 2015, but it’s far lower than it was 30 to 40 years ago. (Feb. 7)

Spicer explained that the delay in repealing Obamacare was a result of the White House wanting to work with Congress. Unlike during the Obama administration, he asserted, the legislature ? not the White House ? was taking the lead on health care. Various congressional committees worked on drafting multiple versions of the bill that would become the Affordable Care Act ? a lengthy process that took over a year. (Feb. 7)

Trump accused Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) of misrepresenting “what Judge Neil Gorsuch told him” in response to the president’s attacks against the judiciary. Gorsuch called Trump’s tweets attacking federal judges “demoralizing.” A spokesman for Gorsuch confirmed the judge’s remarks. (Feb. 9)

Trump has repeatedly said he doesn’t watch CNN. But he had to in order to see and offer and opinion on the network’s interview with Blumenthal. (Feb. 9)

Former national security adviser Michael Flynn has said that phone calls he made to Russia prior to Trump’s inauguration were not related to sanctions. According to a Washington Post report, however, Flynn held private discussions with Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador, before Trump took office, suggesting that sanctions against Moscow would be eased by the incoming administration. (Feb. 9)

Trump took credit for Ford’s decision not to open an auto factory in Mexico and instead expand its Michigan plant. The company said Trump was not responsible for its decision. (Feb. 9)

Trump told a room full of politicians that “thousands” of “illegal” voters had been driven into New Hampshire to cast ballots. There is no evidence of such a claim. (Feb. 11)

During an interview with ABC’s “This Week,” White House senior policy aide Stephen Miller falsely said the “issue of busing voters into New Hampshire is widely known by anyone who’s worked in New Hampshire politics.” Again, not true. (Feb. 11)

Miller cited the “astonishing” statistic that 14 percent of noncitizens are registered to vote. The study the stat is based on has been highly contested. (Feb. 11)

Trump said Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) was “cut off” on CNN for “using the term fake news the describe the network.” The senator was joking and he was not cut off. (Feb. 12)

Trump accused the media of refusing to report on “big crowds of enthusiastic supporters lining the road” in Florida. There were a few supporters, but they were vastly outnumbered by hundreds of protesters. (Feb. 12)

White House officials told reporters that Flynn decided on his own to resign. However, Spicer said during a press briefing that the president asked Flynn to resign. (Feb. 13)

Trump denied in a January interview that he or anyone on his campaign had any contact with Russia prior to the election. However, The New York Times and CNN both reported that Trump campaign officials and associates “had repeated contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials” before Nov. 8. (Feb. 15)

Spicer denied in a daily briefing that anyone on the Trump campaign had had any contact with Russian officials. (Feb. 15)

Trump complained he “inherited a mess” upon being elected to office. The stock market is experiencing record highs, the economy is stable and growing, and unemployment is low. (Feb. 16)

Trump disputed the notion that his administration is experiencing turmoil, telling reporters it is working like a “fine-tuned machine.” His poorly executed travel ban has been suspended by the courts, a Cabinet nominee was forced to withdraw his nomination, and Trump’s national security adviser resigned after less than four weeks on the job. (Feb. 16)

Trump said his 306 Electoral College votes was the biggest electoral votes victory since Ronald Reagan. He actually received 304 electoral votes. Moreover, Obama got 332 votes in 2012. (Feb. 16)

Trump said his first weeks in office “represented an unprecedented month of action.” Obama accomplished much more during his first weeks in office. (Feb. 16)

Defending himself from charges of hypocrisy on the matter of leaks ? which he frequently celebrated when they pertained to his campaign opposition but now denounces ? Trump said that WikiLeaks does not publicize “classified information.” It does, often anonymously. (Feb. 16)

Trump repeated his claim that Hillary Clinton gave 20 percent of American uranium to the Russians in a deal during her tenure as secretary of state. Not true. (Feb. 16)

Trump said drugs are “becoming cheaper than a candy bar.” They are not. (Feb. 16)

Trump said his administration had a “very smooth rollout of the travel ban.” His immigration caused chaos at the nation’s airports and has been suspended by the courts. (Feb. 16)

Trump said the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals is in “chaos” and “turmoil.” It is not. (Feb. 16)

Flynn lied to FBI investigators in a Jan. 24 interview about whether he discussed sanctions with Russian officials prior to Trump’s inauguration, according to The Washington Post. (Feb. 16)

Trump falsely suggested at a Florida rally that Sweden had suffered a terror attack the night before his speech. It had not, and Trump was likely referring to a Fox News segment on crime in Sweden. (Feb. 18)

During his Florida rally, Trump repeated his false claim that the United States has already let in thousands of people who “there was no way to vet.” Refugees undergo the most rigorous vetting process of any immigrants admitted to the United States, often waiting upwards of two years to be cleared for entry. (Feb. 18)

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus said in a “Fox News Sunday” interview that Trump “has accomplished more in the first 30 days than people can remember.” Obama accomplished much more during his first weeks in office. (Feb. 19)

Trump said during his campaign that he would only play golf with heads of state and business leaders, not friends and celebrities like Obama did. Trump has golfed with world leaders like Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Most recently, however, he hit the links with golf pro Rory McIlroy, International Sports Management’s Nick Mullen and his friend Rich Levine. (Feb. 19)

A White House spokesperson told reporters that Trump only played a “couple” of holes at his golf resort in Florida. A day later, as reports came out saying the president had played 18 holes with Mcllroy, the White House admitted he played “longer.” (Feb. 19)

Trump said the media is “trying to say large scale immigration in Sweden is working out just beautifully. NOT!” Sweden’s crime rate has fallen in recent years, and experts there do not think its immigration policies are linked to crime. (Feb. 20)

Spicer said Ohio Gov. John Kasich (R) asked for a meeting with Trump at the White House. John Weaver, a former campaign aide of the governor, said the president asked for the meeting. (Feb. 21)

Vice President Mike Pence called Obamacare a “job killer.” Overall, job growth has been steady since it was signed into law. And the number of unwilling part-time jobs has also gone down, contrary to GOP claims. (Feb. 22)

Trump claimed that he negotiated $1 billion in savings to develop two new Boeing Co. jets to serve as the next Air Force One. The Air Force can’t account for that number. (Feb. 22)

During a meeting with the nation’s CEOs at the White House, Trump claimed his new economic adviser Gary Cohn “paid $200 million in tax” to take a job at the White House. Cohn didn’t have to pay taxes, he had to sell more than $200 million of Goldman Sachs stock. (Feb. 23)

Trump claimed there were “six blocks” worth of people waiting to get into the Conservative Political Action Conference to see him. People filled only three overflow rooms. (Feb. 24)

At CPAC, Trump said that Obamacare covers “very few people.” Nearly 20 million people have gotten health insurance under the law. (Feb. 24)

At CPAC, Trump said companies like Intel were making business investments in the United States because of his election. The company planned their new investments before the election. (Feb. 24)

# WikiLeaks document on CIA hacking capacity

By Laura Clawson

Daily Kos

Tuesday Mar 07, 2017

WikiLeaks is back, this time with thousands of documents from the CIA’s Center for Cyber Intelligence:

The dump could not immediately be authenticated by The Associated Press and the CIA declined comment, but WikiLeaks has a long track record of releasing top secret government documents. Experts who've started to sift through the material said it appeared legitimate — and that the release was almost certain to shake the CIA.

WikiLeaks, which had been dropping cryptic hints about the release for a month, said in a lengthy statement that the CIA had "recently" *lost control of a massive arsenal of CIA hacking tools as well as associated documentation. The radical transparency organization said that "the archive appears to have been circulated among former U.S. government hackers and contractors in an unauthorized manner" and that one of them "provided WikiLeaks with portions of the archive."*

The leak could be significant

The website says the CIA "*lost control of the majority of its hacking arsenal," more than several hundred million lines of code, providing "the entire hacking capacity of the CIA."*

# Trump on Twitter March 10 2017

What Trump got wrong on Twitter this week (#7)

By Michelle Ye Hee Lee March 10, 2017

Washington Post

Welcome to the seventh installment of our occasional Friday feature looking at what the president got wrong on Twitter in a given week. The president has been less active on Twitter in recent weeks, so it’s been almost a month since our last roundup.

But he was back at it this week. Here’s a look at false or misleading claims that Trump made in 20 tweets in the past week, including one from the @POTUS account.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*It is so pathetic that the Dems have still not approved my full Cabinet*.

4:19 AM - 3 Mar 2017

The Senate Democrats did hold up Trump’s Cabinet picks at one time. But as of Trump’s tweet, there were two empty slots; the administration had not sent the rest of the paperwork for one and had not sent a nominee to fill the other.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) tweeted the prior evening, on March 2:

Marco Rubio ? @marcorubio

After the votes taken earlier this afternoon, the U.S. Senate has now confirmed all of the available Cabinet nominations.

6:33 PM - 2 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*We should start an immediate investigation into @SenSchumer and his ties to Russia and Putin. A total hypocrite!*

9:54 AM - 3 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*I hereby demand a second investigation, after Schumer, of Pelosi for her close ties to Russia, and lying about it.*

1:02 PM - 3 Mar 2017

The Democratic House leader sat with the Russian ambassador and other officials in 2010.

politico.com

Trump makes a misleading comparison between Attorney General Jeff Sessions’s meetings with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and Sen. Charles E. Schumer’s (D-N.Y.) meeting Vladimir Putin at a public event in 2003. Sessions, who was a Trump campaign surrogate, misled Congress by not disclosing that he met with Kislyak on at least two occasions during the 2016 presidential campaign, including one private meeting at Sessions’s Senate office.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi’s (D-Calif.) 2010 meeting with then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev is also not directly comparable to Sessions’s communications with Kislyak. Pelosi and other House leaders met with Medvedev, who brought Kislyak and other top Russian officials to the meeting.

Pelosi said on CNN’s “State of the Union” on March 5: “We were meeting with the president of Russia. He brought an entourage in with him. He was the one who was doing the talking. The question is, have you met with him? No, I haven’t met with him. I met with the president of Russia. Who else is in his entourage, who know? Presidents, heads of state come in, they bring their party. They barely even introduce them. So, this is completely, completely different.”

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my "wires tapped" in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!*

3:35 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Is it legal for a sitting President to be "wire tapping" a race for president prior to an election? Turned down by court earlier. A NEW LOW!*

3:49 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*I'd bet a good lawyer could make a great case out of the fact that President Obama was tapping my phones in October, just prior to Election!*

3:52 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*How low has President Obama gone to tapp my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy!*

4:02 AM - 4 Mar 2017

There is no evidence that Obama ordered the wiretapping of Trump’s calls. Trump seized on reports in the right-leaning media, but even the reports cited by the White House did not make this allegation. We issued Four Pinocchios to Trump’s claims.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Just out: The same Russian Ambassador that met Jeff Sessions visited the Obama White House 22 times, and 4 times last year alone.*

3:42 AM - 4 Mar 2017

This is a misleading comparison. Sessions appears to have misled the Senate about his meetings, while the meetings at the White House were recorded in a public log that Trump has now eliminated.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't voluntarily leaving the Apprentice, he was fired by his bad (pathetic) ratings, not by me. Sad end to great show*

5:19 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Schwarzenegger said he was leaving of his own accord, blaming animus toward Trump for the show’s sagging ratings.

Schwarzenegger’s response:

Arnold ? @Schwarzenegger

*You should think about hiring a new joke writer and a fact checker*. …

5:57 AM - 4 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Is it true the DNC would not allow the FBI access to check server or other equipment after learning it was hacked? Can that be possible?*

3:32 AM - 5 Mar 2017

The FBI and the Democratic National Committee disagree on whether the FBI requested access to the DNC’s servers. FBI Director James B. Comey testified to the Senate Intelligence Committee that the bureau made “multiple requests at different levels” to access DNC’s servers, but the DNC said the FBI never requested access.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Thank you for the great rallies all across the country. Tremendous support. Make America Great Again!*

9:30 AM - 5 Mar 2017

The size of crowds holding “March 4 Trump” rallies varied, from about 30 people in Indianapolis to about 400 in St. Paul, Minn. Some rallies drew just as many protesters as supporters.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

'*President Trump Congratulates Exxon Mobil for Job-Creating Investment* …

1:19 PM - 6 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*45,000 construction & manufacturing jobs in the U.S. Gulf Coast region. $20 billion investment. We are already winning again, America*!

1:22 PM - 6 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*There is an incredible spirit of optimism sweeping the country right now—we're bringing back the JOBS*!

3:49 PM - 6 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Buy American & hire American are the principles at the core of my agenda, which is: JOBS, JOBS, JOBS! Thank you @exxonmobil*.

7:49 PM - 6 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Thank you to @exxonmobil for your $20 billion investment that is creating more than 45,000 manufacturing & construction jobs in the USA!*

7:50 PM - 6 Mar 2017

Trump continues to take credit for projects long in the works before he became president. ExxonMobil has been planning this since 2013.

On March 6, the oil giant announced its “Growing the Gulf” investment plan to invest $20 billion over 10 years in projects in Texas and Louisiana. The company said its plan would create 35,000 construction jobs and 12,000 full-time jobs, through 11 chemical, refining, lubricant and liquefied natural gas projects. The company acknowledged that its investments began in 2013 and are expected to continue through at least 2022.

ExxonMobil’s spending plan may seem like a lot, but it represents only 10 percent of the company’s current capital spending levels, our colleagues reported: “Those levels would probably increase with higher oil prices. Moreover, ExxonMobil has been a major operator and investor in the Gulf of Mexico region for decades. The gulf accounts for nearly a fifth of U.S. domestic oil production.”

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*122 vicious prisoners, released by the Obama Administration from Gitmo, have returned to the battlefield. Just another terrible decision!*

4:04 AM - 7 Mar 2017

This is false. Data published by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence by the time of Trump’s tweet showed that nine of the 122 former detainees confirmed of re-engaging in terrorist or insurgent activities were released under Obama, and 113 were released under the George W. Bush administration.

An updated report released after Trump’s tweet showed eight of 121 were released under Obama and 113 of 121 under Bush.

Trump first tweeted this at 7:04 a.m. on the @realDonaldTrump account, and it was immediately called out as false on Twitter, including by The Fact Checker.

Glenn Kessler ? @GlennKesslerWP

*Totally false! Data from DNI--which you oversee--says only 9 were released under Obama and 113 under Bush*.

4:30 AM - 7 Mar 2017

But then at 8:03 a.m., he repeated the same tweet on the @POTUS account.

President Trump ? @POTUS

*122 vicious prisoners, released by the Obama Administration from Gitmo, have returned to the battlefield. Just another terrible decision!*

5:03 AM - 7 Mar 2017

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*LinkedIn Workforce Report: January and February were the strongest consecutive months for hiring since August and September 2015*

4:11 AM - 8 Mar 2017

Trump failed to read the fine print of the LinkedIn Workforce report. The numbers were affected by seasonal hiring. When adjusted for seasonal hiring variations, hiring was down 1.3 percent from January to February, the first full month of Trump’s term.

Donald J. Trump ? @realDonaldTrump

*Despite what you hear in the press, healthcare is coming along great. We are talking to many groups and it will end in a beautiful picture!*

9:01 AM - 9 Mar 2017

The press is reporting reactions to the replacement plan from lawmakers and industry groups from all sides of the political spectrum. Conservative and liberal industry groups have opposed the plan, along with Democrats and some Republican lawmakers, both moderate and conservative.

Donald Trump

President of the United States

“*How low has President Obama gone to tapp [sic] my phones during the very sacred election process. This is Nixon/Watergate. Bad (or sick) guy*!”

in a tweet – Saturday, March 4, 2017

Donald Trump

President of the United States

"*There is an incredible spirit of optimism sweeping the country right now—we're bringing back the JOBS!"*

*in a tweet* – Monday, March 6, 2017

# Trump has been incompetent

**So far, Trump has been mercifully incompetent**

Washington Post

By Dana Milbank Opinion writer March 17, 2017

“The world is laughing at us. They’re laughing at the stupidity of our president.”

— Donald Trump, October 2016

Stupid is as stupid does.

During the presidential campaign, Donald Trump remarked often on the stupidity of our leaders. He was under the impression that the rest of the planet was indulging in some sort of global guffaw at our expense. “How stupid are we? The world is laughing.” If so, what must the mirthful world think of our current state of affairs? This past week alone:

Here’s how the White House has been defending Trump’s wiretapping claims

White House press secretary Sean Spicer has been repeatedly defending President Trump’s unproven claims that former president Barack Obama ordered a wiretap on him in 2016.

The House and Senate intelligence committees said they saw no evidence for President Trump’s wild claim that President Barack Obama wiretapped Trump Tower, and Britain protested that the White House falsely alleged that British intelligence was involved. White House press secretary Sean Spicer has been arguing that Trump didn’t mean wiretapping when he said Obama had Trump’s “wires tapped.” Trump counselor Kellyanne Conway suggested that eavesdropping could have been accomplished using microwave ovens.

Trump’s fellow Republicans pronounced his budget dead on arrival in Congress — “draconian, careless and counterproductive” were the words used by Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), former House Appropriations Committee chairman — because it recklessly cuts (slashing the State Department by nearly a third and targeting Meals on Wheels for the elderly) yet still adds to the debt Trump promised to eliminate.

Legislation to replace Obamacare stalled in Congress and had to be rewritten because of a rebellion within Trump’s own party.

A judge halted Trump’s second attempt at a ban on travel from several Muslim countries.

And Republican lawmakers probing Trump’s ties to Russia threatened subpoenas over the executive branch’s stonewalling.

In one of the presidential debates, CNBC’s John Harwood asked Trump if he was running “a comic book version of a presidential campaign.” Now Trump seems to be running a cartoon version of a presidency, and he’s Elmer Fudd. His proposals could, if successfully implemented, be ruinous. But so far, at least, Trump has been mercifully incompetent.

He and the GOP-controlled Congress have been on the job two months, but he has signed only nine bills into law, none major. The only law so far this month: a bill naming the Veterans Affairs facility in Butler County, Pa. A McClatchy-Marist poll last month found that a **58 percent majority of Americans reported being “embarrassed” by Trump**. For good reason:

Trump’s first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, lasted just 24 days on the job after misrepresenting his contacts with Russia. Attorney General Jeff Sessions falsely testified that he’d had no contacts with the Russians, forcing his recusal from Russia investigations once the truth came out.

Trump’s nominee to be labor secretary withdrew in the face of broad opposition. His education secretary, who suggested that schools need guns to defend against grizzlies, was confirmed only when the vice president broke a tie vote.

Trump blamed a “so-called” judge for striking down his first travel ban and proposed blaming the court system if there was a terrorist attack; his own Supreme Court nominee called such remarks disheartening.

Trump conducted sensitive diplomacy over a North Korean missile launch with the Japanese prime minister surrounded by diners at his Mar-a-Lago country club, one of whom posted online a photo of the man carrying the nuclear football.

Trump, after inflating the crowd size at his inauguration and embracing a conspiracy theory that 3 million to 5 million Americans voted illegally, falsely accused the media of not covering terrorist attacks. The White House then produced a badly spelled list of attacks, most of which had been covered. Conway invented one attack, the “Bowling Green massacre.”

Conway pitched Ivanka Trump’s fashion line on Fox News. Taxpayers have subsidized millions of dollars’ worth of expenses related to Mar-a-Lago and the Trump sons’ foreign travel.

Trump marked Black History Month with remarks suggesting he thought abolitionist Frederick Douglass was still alive.

Trump opened a rift with Australia in an angry phone call with that ally’s prime minister. He provoked the Mexican president to cancel a trip to Washington, and he baffled the Swedes by alluding to fictitious refugee-related violence “last night in Sweden.” Britain postponed a visit from Trump in hopes that anti-Trump protests would cool.

Trump’s closest aides have leaked several accounts of him raging about the White House. His team is frequently caught off guard by his Twitter attacks, which have included shots at Arnold Schwarzenegger and Nordstrom and misinformation Trump heard on Fox News.

This tragicomedy adds irony when you consider that the main character is the same one who campaigned by saying “they laugh at our stupidity” and “we are led by very, very stupid people” and “I have the best words, but there’s no better word than ‘stupid.’ ”

Now the world has reason to laugh at us — because we’re with stupid.

Dana Milbank writes about political theater in the nation’s capital. He joined the Post as a political reporter in 2000.

# Trump’s Approval Rating Hits New Record Low

By Daniel Politi

Slate

Two months into his presidency, Donald Trump’s ratings continue to fall. The commander in chief’s approval rating fell to a new low over the weekend to **37 percent**, according to the latest Gallup poll. That marks a sharp drop from the 45 percent of a week earlier and comes as Trump’s **disapproval rating hit 58 percent**, also a high point since the real estate mogul was sworn into office.

Needless to say, those are the worst numbers for any president this early in his administration in the history of modern polling.

The comparisons are pretty incredible:

Gallup- Job approval upon hitting 60 days in office:

Carter 75

Reagan 60

HW Bush 56

Clinton 53

W Bush 58

Obama 63

Trump... 37

Gallup- Job \*disapproval\* upon hitting 60 days in office:

Carter 9

Reagan 24

HW Bush 16

Clinton 34

W Bush 29

Obama 26

Trump... 58

The dip in Trump’s approval rating comes after a tumultuous week in which the president struggled to sell a plan to repeal and replace Obamacare and questions continue to swirl about Russia’s involvement in his campaign.

The Independent points out that Trump mocked Obama for his “record low” 39 percent Gallup approval rating in August 2011, a level he has now surpassed.

The latest Gallup numbers come on the heels of another poll that showed 57 percent of young Americans see Trump’s presidency as illegitimate. GenForward’s poll found that only 22 percent of 18-to-30-year-olds approve of the job Trump is doing as president, while 62 percent disapprove.

Daniel Politi has been contributing to Slate since 2004 and wrote the Today’s Papers column from 2006 to 2009.

# The Problem with Trump

A series of Times editorials

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

I. Our Dishonest President

II. Why Trump Lies

III. Trump’s Authoritarian Vision

IV. Trump’s War on Journalism

V. Conspiracy Theorist in Chief

VI. California Fights Back

## Part I. Our Dishonest President

APRIL 2, 2017

It was no secret during the campaign that Donald Trump was a **narcissist and a demagogue who used fear and dishonesty to appeal to the worst in American voters**. The Times called him unprepared and unsuited for the job he was seeking, and said his election would be a “catastrophe.”

Still, nothing prepared us for the magnitude of this train wreck. Like millions of other Americans, we clung to a slim hope that the new president would turn out to be all noise and bluster, or that the people around him in the White House would act as a check on his worst instincts, or that he would be sobered and transformed by the awesome responsibilities of office.

Instead, seventy-some days in — and with about 1,400 to go before his term is completed — it is increasingly clear that those hopes were misplaced.

In a matter of weeks, **President Trump has taken dozens of real-life steps that, if they are not reversed, will rip families apart, foul rivers and pollute the air, intensify the calamitous effects of climate change and profoundly weaken the system of American public education for all.**

His attempt to de-insure millions of people who had finally received healthcare coverage and, along the way, enact a massive transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich has been put on hold for the moment. But he is proceeding with his efforts to defang the government’s regulatory agencies and bloat the Pentagon’s budget even as he supposedly retreats from the global stage.

These are immensely dangerous developments which threaten to weaken this country’s moral standing in the world, imperil the planet and reverse years of slow but steady gains by marginalized or impoverished Americans. But, chilling as they are, these radically wrongheaded policy choices are not, in fact, the most frightening aspect of the Trump presidency.

What is most worrisome about Trump is Trump himself. He is a man so unpredictable, so reckless, so petulant, so full of blind self-regard, so untethered to reality that it is impossible to know where his presidency will lead or how much damage he will do to our nation. His obsession with his own fame, wealth and success, his determination to vanquish enemies real and imagined, his craving for adulation — these traits were, of course, at the very heart of his scorched-earth outsider campaign; indeed, some of them helped get him elected. But in a real presidency in which he wields unimaginable power, they are nothing short of disastrous.

Although his policies are, for the most part, variations on classic Republican positions (many of which would have been undertaken by a President Ted Cruz or a President Marco Rubio), they become far more dangerous in the hands of this imprudent and erratic man. Many Republicans, for instance, support tighter border security and a tougher response to illegal immigration, but Trump’s cockamamie border wall, his impracticable campaign promise to deport all 11 million people living in the country illegally and his blithe disregard for the effect of such proposals on the U.S. relationship with Mexico turn a very bad policy into an appalling one.

In the days ahead, The Times editorial board will look more closely at the new president, with a special attention to three troubling traits:

1. Trump’s shocking lack of respect for those fundamental rules and institutions on which our government is based. Since Jan. 20, he has repeatedly disparaged and challenged those entities that have threatened his agenda, stoking public distrust of essential institutions in a way that undermines faith in American democracy. He has questioned the qualifications of judges and the integrity of their decisions, rather than acknowledging that even the president must submit to the rule of law. He has clashed with his own intelligence agencies, demeaned government workers and questioned the credibility of the electoral system and the Federal Reserve. He has lashed out at journalists, declaring them “enemies of the people,” rather than defending the importance of a critical, independent free press. His contempt for the rule of law and the norms of government are palpable.
2. His utter lack of regard for truth. Whether it is the easily disprovable boasts about the size of his inauguration crowd or his unsubstantiated assertion that Barack Obama bugged Trump Tower, the new president regularly muddies the waters of fact and fiction. It’s difficult to know whether he actually can’t distinguish the real from the unreal — or whether he intentionally conflates the two to befuddle voters, deflect criticism and undermine the very idea of objective truth. Whatever the explanation, he is encouraging Americans to reject facts, to disrespect science, documents, nonpartisanship and the mainstream media — and instead to simply take positions on the basis of ideology and preconceived notions. This is a recipe for a divided country in which differences grow deeper and rational compromise becomes impossible.
3. His scary willingness to repeat alt-right conspiracy theories, racist memes and crackpot, out-of-the-mainstream ideas. Again, it is not clear whether he believes them or merely uses them. But to cling to disproven “alternative” facts; to retweet racists; to make unverifiable or false statements about rigged elections and fraudulent voters; to buy into discredited conspiracy theories first floated on fringe websites and in supermarket tabloids — these are all of a piece with the Barack Obama birther claptrap that Trump was peddling years ago and which brought him to political prominence. It is deeply alarming that a president would lend the credibility of his office to ideas that have been rightly rejected by politicians from both major political parties.

Where will this end? Will Trump moderate his crazier campaign positions as time passes? Or will he provoke confrontation with Iran, North Korea or China, or disobey a judge’s order or order a soldier to violate the Constitution? Or, alternately, will the system itself — the Constitution, the courts, the permanent bureaucracy, the Congress, the Democrats, the marchers in the streets — protect us from him as he alienates more and more allies at home and abroad, steps on his own message and creates chaos at the expense of his ability to accomplish his goals? Already, Trump’s job approval rating has been hovering in the mid-30s, according to Gallup, a shockingly low level of support for a new president. And that was before his former national security advisor, Michael Flynn, offered to cooperate last week with congressional investigators looking into the connection between the Russian government and the Trump campaign.

On Inauguration Day, we wrote on this page that it was not yet time to declare a state of “wholesale panic” or to call for blanket “non-cooperation” with the Trump administration. Despite plenty of dispiriting signals, that is still our view. The role of the rational opposition is to stand up for the rule of law, the electoral process, the peaceful transfer of power and the role of institutions; we should not underestimate the resiliency of a system in which laws are greater than individuals and voters are as powerful as presidents. This nation survived Andrew Jackson and Richard Nixon. It survived slavery. It survived devastating wars. Most likely, it will survive again.

But if it is to do so, those who oppose the new president’s reckless and heartless agenda must make their voices heard. Protesters must raise their banners. Voters must turn out for elections. Members of Congress — including and especially Republicans — must find the political courage to stand up to Trump. Courts must safeguard the Constitution. State legislators must pass laws to protect their citizens and their policies from federal meddling. All of us who are in the business of holding leaders accountable must redouble our efforts to defend the truth from his cynical assaults.

The United States is not a perfect country, and it has a great distance to go before it fully achieves its goals of liberty and equality. But preserving what works and defending the rules and values on which democracy depends are a shared responsibility. Everybody has a role to play in this drama.

## PART II Why Trump Lies

APRIL 3, 2017

Donald Trump did not invent the lie and is not even its master. Lies have oozed out of the White House for more than two centuries and out of politicians’ mouths — out of all people’s mouths — likely as long as there has been human speech.

But amid all those lies, told to ourselves and to one another in order to amass power, woo lovers, hurt enemies and shield ourselves against the often glaring discomfort of reality, humanity has always had an abiding respect for truth.

In the United States, born and periodically reborn out of the repeated recognition and rejection of the age-old lie that some people are meant to take dominion over others, truth is as vital a part of the civic, social and intellectual culture as justice and liberty. Our civilization is premised on the conviction that such a thing as truth exists, that it is knowable, that it is verifiable, that it exists independently of authority or popularity and that at some point — and preferably sooner rather than later — it will prevail.

Even American leaders who lie generally know the difference between their statements and the truth. Richard Nixon said “I am not a crook” but by that point must have seen that he was. Bill Clinton said “I did not have sexual relations with that woman” but knew that he did.

The insult that **Donald Trump brings to the equation is an apparent disregard for fact so profound as to suggest that he may not see much practical distinction between lies, if he believes they serve him, and the truth**.

His approach succeeds because of his preternaturally deft grasp of his audience. Though he is neither terribly articulate nor a seasoned politician, he has a remarkable instinct for discerning which conspiracy theories in which quasi-news source, or which of his own inner musings, will turn into ratings gold. He targets the darkness, anger and insecurity that hide in each of us and harnesses them for his own purposes. If one of his lies doesn’t work — well, then he lies about that.

If we harbor latent racism or if we fear terror attacks by Muslim extremists, then he elevates a rumor into a public debate: Was Barack Obama born in Kenya, and is he therefore not really president?

An ‘extremely credible source’ has called my office and told me that @BarackObama's birth certificate is a fraud.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 6, 2012

Libya is being taken over by Islamic radicals—-with @BarackObama's open support.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 31, 2011

If his own ego is threatened — if broadcast footage and photos show a smaller-sized crowd at his inauguration than he wanted — then he targets the news media, falsely charging outlets with disseminating “fake news” and insisting, against all evidence, that he has proved his case (“We caught them in a beauty,” he said).

If his attempt to limit the number of Muslim visitors to the U.S. degenerates into an absolute fiasco and a display of his administration’s incompetence, then he falsely asserts that terrorist attacks are underreported. (One case in point offered by the White House was the 2015 attack in San Bernardino, which in fact received intensive worldwide news coverage. The Los Angeles Times won a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the subject).

If he detects that his audience may be wearying of his act, or if he worries about a probe into Russian meddling into the election that put him in office, he tweets in the middle of the night the astonishingly absurd claim that President Obama tapped his phones. And when evidence fails to support him he dispatches his aides to explain that by “phone tapping” he obviously didn’t mean phone tapping. Instead of backing down when confronted with reality, he insists that his rebutted assertions will be vindicated as true at some point in the future.

Trump’s easy embrace of untruth can sometimes be entertaining, in the vein of a Moammar Kadafi speech to the United Nations or the self-serving blathering of a 6-year-old.

But he is not merely amusing. He is dangerous. His choice of falsehoods and his method of spewing them — often in tweets, as if he spent his days and nights glued to his bedside radio and was periodically set off by some drivel uttered by a talk show host who repeated something he’d read on some fringe blog — are a clue to Trump’s thought processes and perhaps his lack of agency. **He gives every indication that he is as much the gullible tool of liars as he is the liar in chief.**

He has made himself the stooge, the mark, for every crazy blogger, political quack, racial theorist, foreign leader or nutcase peddling a story that he might repackage to his benefit as a tweet, an appointment, an executive order or a policy. He is a stranger to the concept of verification, the insistence on evidence and the standards of proof that apply in a courtroom or a medical lab — and that ought to prevail in the White House.

There have always been those who accept the intellectually bankrupt notion that people are entitled to invent their own facts — consider the “9/11 was an inside job” trope — but Trump’s ascent marks the first time that the culture of alternative reality has made its home at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

If Americans are unsure which Trump they have — the Machiavellian negotiator who lies to manipulate simpler minds, or one of those simpler minds himself — does it really matter? In either case he puts the nation in danger by undermining the role of truth in public discourse and policymaking, as well as the notion of truth being verifiable and mutually intelligible.

In the months ahead, Trump will bring his embrace of alternative facts on the nation’s behalf into talks with China, North Korea or any number of powers with interests counter to ours and that constitute an existential threat. At home, Trump now becomes the embodiment of the populist notion (with roots planted at least as deeply in the Left as the Right) that verifiable truth is merely a concept invented by fusty intellectuals, and that popular leaders can provide some equally valid substitute. We’ve seen people like that before, and we have a name for them: demagogues.

Our civilization is defined in part by the disciplines — science, law, journalism — that have developed systematic methods to arrive at the truth. Citizenship brings with it the obligation to engage in a similar process. Good citizens test assumptions, question leaders, argue details, research claims.

Investigate. Read. Write. Listen. Speak. Think. Be wary of those who disparage the investigators, the readers, the writers, the listeners, the speakers and the thinkers. Be suspicious of those who confuse reality with reality TV, and those who repeat falsehoods while insisting, against all evidence, that they are true. To defend freedom, demand fact.

## PART III Trump's Authoritarian Vision

APRIL 4, 2017

Standing before the cheering throngs at the Republican National Convention last summer, Donald Trump bemoaned how special interests had rigged the country’s politics and its economy, leaving Americans victimized by unfair trade deals, incompetent bureaucrats and spineless leaders.

He swooped into politics, he declared, to subvert the powerful and rescue those who cannot defend themselves. “Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it.”

To Trump’s faithful, those words were a rallying cry. But his critics heard something far more menacing in them: a **dangerously authoritarian vision of the presidency — one that would crop up time and again as he talked about overruling generals, disregarding international law, ordering soldiers to commit war crimes, jailing his opponent**.

Trump has no experience in politics; he’s never previously run for office or held a government position. So perhaps he was unaware that one of the hallmarks of the American system of government is that the president’s power to “fix” things unilaterally is constrained by an array of strong institutions — including the courts, the media, the permanent federal bureaucracy and Congress. Combined, they provide an essential defense against an imperial presidency.

Yet in his first weeks at the White House, President Trump has already sought to undermine many of those institutions. Those that have displayed the temerity to throw some hurdle in the way of a Trump objective have quickly felt the heat.

Consider Trump’s feud with the courts.

He has repeatedly questioned the impartiality and the motives of judges. For example, he attacked the jurists who ruled against his order excluding travelers from seven majority Muslim nations, calling one a “so-called judge” and later tweeting:

Just cannot believe a judge would put our country in such peril. If something happens blame him and court system. People pouring in. Bad!

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) February 5, 2017

It’s nothing new for presidents to disagree with court decisions. But Trump’s direct, personal attacks on judges’ integrity and on the legitimacy of the judicial system itself — and his irresponsible suggestion that the judiciary should be blamed for future terrorist attacks — go farther. They aim to undermine public faith in the third branch of government.

The courts are the last line of defense for the Constitution and the rule of law; that’s what makes them such a powerful buffer against an authoritarian leader. The president of the United States should understand that and respect it.

Other institutions under attack include:

1. The electoral process. Faced with certified election results showing that Hillary Clinton outpolled him by nearly 3 million votes, Trump repeated the unsubstantiated — and likely crackpot — assertion that Clinton’s supporters had duped local polling places with millions of fraudulent votes. In a democracy, the right to vote is the one check that the people themselves hold against their leaders; sowing distrust in elections is the kind of thing leaders do when they don’t want their power checked.
2. The intelligence community. After reports emerged that the Central Intelligence Agency believed Russia had tried to help Trump win, the president-elect’s transition team responded: “These are the same people that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.” It was a snarky, dismissive, undermining response — and the administration has continued to belittle the intelligence community and question its motives since then, while also leaking stories about possibly paring and restructuring its ranks. It is bizarre to watch Trump continue to tussle publicly with this particular part of the government, whose leaders he himself has appointed, as if he were still an outsider candidate raging against the machine. It’s unnerving too, given the intelligence services’ crucial role in protecting the country against hidden risks, assisting the U.S. military and helping inform Trump’s decisions.
3. The media. Trump has blistered the mainstream media for reporting that has cast him in a poor light, saying outlets concocted narratives based on nonexistent anonymous sources. In February he said that the “fake news” media will “never represent the people,” adding ominously: “And we’re going to do something about it.” His goal seems to be to defang the media watchdog by making the public doubt any coverage that accuses Trump of blundering or abusing his power.
4. Federal agencies. In addition to calling for agency budgets to be chopped by up to 30%, Trump appointed a string of Cabinet secretaries who were hostile to much of their agencies’ missions and the laws they’re responsible for enforcing. He has also proposed deep cuts in federal research programs, particularly in those related to climate change. It’s easier to argue that climate change isn’t real when you’re no longer collecting the data that documents it.

In a way, Trump represents a culmination of trends that have been years in the making.

Conservative talk radio hosts have long blasted federal judges as “activists” and regulators as meddlers in the economy, while advancing the myth of rampant election fraud. And gridlock in Washington has led previous presidents to try new ways to circumvent the checks on their power — witness President George W. Bush’s use of signing statements to invalidate parts of bills Congress passed, and President Obama’s aggressive use of executive orders when lawmakers balked at his proposals.

What’s uniquely threatening about Trump’s approach, though, is **how many fronts he’s opened in this struggle for power and the vehemence with which he seeks to undermine the institutions that don’t go along.**

It’s one thing to complain about a judicial decision or to argue for less regulation, but to the extent that Trump weakens public trust in essential institutions like the courts and the media, he undermines faith in democracy and in the system and processes that make it work.

Trump betrays no sense for the president’s place among the myriad of institutions in the continuum of governance. He seems willing to violate long-established political norms without a second thought, and he cavalierly rejects the civility and deference that allow the system to run smoothly. He sees himself as not merely a force for change, but as a wrecking ball.

Will Congress act as a check on Trump’s worst impulses as he moves forward? One test is the House and Senate intelligence committees’ investigation into Russia’s meddling in the presidential election; lawmakers need to muster the courage to follow the trail wherever it leads. Can the courts stand up to Trump? Already, several federal judges have issued rulings against the president’s travel ban. And although Trump has railed against the decisions, he has obeyed them.

None of these institutions are eager to cede authority to the White House and they won’t do so without a fight. It would be unrealistic to suggest that America’s most basic democratic institutions are in imminent jeopardy.

But we should not view them as invulnerable either. Remember that Trump’s verbal assaults are directed at the public, and are designed to chip away at people’s confidence in these institutions and deprive them of their validity. When a dispute arises, whose actions are you going to consider legitimate? Whom are you going to trust? That’s why the public has to be wary of Trump’s attacks on the courts, the “deep state,” the “swamp.” We can’t afford to be talked into losing our faith in the forces that protect us from an imperial presidency.

## PART IV Trump's War on Journalism

APRIL 5, 2017

In Donald Trump’s America, **the mere act of reporting news unflattering to the president is held up as evidence of bias. Journalists are slandered as “enemies of the people.”**

Facts that contradict Trump’s version of reality are dismissed as “fake news.” Reporters and their news organizations are “pathetic,” “very dishonest,” “failing,” and even, in one memorable turn of phrase, "a pile of garbage.”

Trump is, of course, not the first American president to whine about the news media or try to influence coverage. President George W. Bush saw the press as elitist and “slick.” President Obama’s press operation tried to exclude Fox News reporters from interviews, blocked many officials from talking to journalists and, most troubling, prosecuted more national security whistle-blowers and leakers than all previous presidents combined.

But Trump being Trump, he has **escalated the traditionally adversarial relationship in demagogic and potentially dangerous ways**.

Most presidents, irritated as they may have been, have continued to acknowledge — at least publicly — that an independent press plays an essential role in American democracy. They’ve recognized that while no news organization is perfect, honest reporting holds leaders and institutions accountable; that’s why a free press was singled out for protection in the 1st Amendment and why outspoken, unfettered journalism is considered a hallmark of a free country.

Trump doesn’t seem to buy it. On his very first day in office, he called journalists “among the most dishonest human beings on earth.”

Since then he has regularly condemned legitimate reporting as “fake news.” His administration has blocked mainstream news organizations, including The Times, from briefings and his secretary of State chose to travel to Asia without taking the press corps, breaking a longtime tradition.

This may seem like bizarre behavior from a man who consumes the news in print and on television so voraciously and who is in many ways a product of the media. He comes from reality TV, from talk radio with Howard Stern, from the gossip pages of the New York City tabloids, for whose columnists he was both a regular subject and a regular source.

But Trump’s strategy is pretty clear: By branding reporters as liars, he apparently hopes to discredit, disrupt or bully into silence anyone who challenges his version of reality. By undermining trust in news organizations and delegitimizing journalism and muddling the facts so that Americans no longer know who to believe, he can deny and distract and help push his administration’s far-fetched storyline.

It’s a cynical strategy, with some creepy overtones. For instance, when he calls journalists “enemies of the people,” Trump (whether he knows it or not) echoes Josef Stalin and other despots.

But it’s an effective strategy. Such attacks are politically expedient at a moment when trust in the news media is as low as it’s ever been, according to Gallup. And they’re especially resonant with Trump’s supporters, many of whom see journalists as part of the swamp that needs to be drained.

Of course, we’re not perfect. Some readers find news organizations too cynical; others say we’re too elitist. Some say we downplay important stories, or miss them altogether. Conservatives often perceive an unshakable liberal bias in the media (while critics on the left see big, corporate-owned media institutions like The Times as hopelessly centrist).

To do the best possible job, and to hold the confidence of the public in turbulent times, requires constant self-examination and evolution. Soul-searching moments — such as those that occurred after the New York Times was criticized for its coverage of the Bush administration and the Iraq war or, more recently, when the media failed to take Trump’s candidacy seriously enough in the early days of his campaign — can help us do a better job for readers. Even if we are not faultless, the news media remain an essential component in the democratic process and should not be undermined by the president.

Some critics have argued that if Trump is going to treat the news media like the “opposition party” (a phrase his senior aide Steve Bannon has used), then journalists should start acting like opponents too. But that would be a mistake. The role of an institution like the Los Angeles Times (or the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal or CNN) is to be independent and aggressive in pursuit of the truth — not to take sides. The editorial pages are the exception: Here we can and should express our opinions about Trump. But the news pages, which operate separately, should report intensively without prejudice, partiality or partisanship.

Given the very real dangers posed by this administration, we should be indefatigable in covering Trump, but shouldn’t let his bullying attitude persuade us to be anything other than objective, fair, open-minded and dogged.

The fundamentals of journalism are more important than ever. With the president of the United States launching a direct assault on the integrity of the mainstream media, news organizations, including The Times, must be courageous in our reporting and resolute in our pursuit of the truth.

## Part V Conspiracy Theorist in Chief

April 6, 2017

It was bad enough back in 2011 when Donald Trump began peddling the **crackpot conspiracy** theory that President Barack Obama was not a native-born American. But at least Trump was just a private citizen then.

By the time he tweeted last month that Obama had sunk so low as to “tapp [sic] my phones during the very sacred election process,” Trump was a sitting president accusing a predecessor of what would have been an impeachable offense.

Trump went public with this absurd accusation without consulting the law enforcement and intelligence officials who would have disabused him of a conspiracy theory he apparently imbibed from right-wing media. After the FBI director debunked it, Trump held fast, claiming he **hadn’t meant that he had been literally wiretapped**.

Most people know by now that the new president of the United States trafficks in untruths and half-truths, and that his word cannot be taken at face value.

Even more troubling, though, is that much of his misinformation is of the creepiest kind. Implausible conspiracy theories from fly-by-night websites; unsubstantiated speculations from supermarket tabloids. Bigoted stories he may have simply made up; stuff he heard on TV talk shows.

The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) November 6, 2012

In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide, I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) November 27, 2016

This is pathetic, but it’s also alarming. If Trump feels free to take to Twitter to **make wild, paranoid, unsubstantiated accusations** against his predecessor, why should the nation believe what he says about a North Korean missile test, Russian troop movements in Europe or a natural disaster in the United States?

Trump’s willingness to embrace unproven, conspiratorial and even racist theories became clear during the campaign, when he repeatedly told tall tales that seemed to reinforce ugly stereotypes about minorities. Take his now famous assertion that he watched thousands of people in “a heavy Arab population” in New Jersey cheer the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11, an astonishing account that no one has been able to verify. PolitiFact rated that as “Pants on Fire.”

Or his retweeting of a bogus crime statistic purporting to show that 81% of white homicide victims are killed by blacks. (The correct figure was 15%.)

On several occasions he retweeted white nationalists. (Remember the image of Hillary Clinton and the star of David, for instance?)

His engagement with, to put it politely, out-of-the-mainstream ideas has attracted some strange bedfellows. It may not be fair to attribute to his senior aide, Steve Bannon, all the views that were published on the controversial alt-right site Breitbart.com, of which Bannon was the executive chairman. But it is certainly fair to wonder **why Trump has elevated to a senior West Wing position a man who has trafficked in nonsense, bigotry and rank speculation**.

Of course it was widely hoped that when Trump came into office he would put the conspiracy theories and red-meat scare stories behind him. Perhaps the “lock her up” mantra and the fear-mongering about Mexican rapists and the racial dog whistles and the assertions about Ted Cruz’s father’s connection to Lee Harvey Oswald — perhaps all that was just part of a cynical bid for votes, and it would go away when the election was over.

But there’s no sign of that. Trump seems as willing to mouth off today as he was on the campaign — about wiretaps, inauguration crowds, fraudulent voters, you name it. And the problem with that is that he is no longer a blowhard TV personality or a raunchy guest on Howard Stern or a self-promoting real estate magnate or even a long-shot candidate for the Republican nomination. He’s now the president of the United States, and he is allowing the credibility of his unimaginably powerful office to be exploited and wasted on crackpot ideas that have been rightly discredited by politicians from both parties.

## Part VI California Fights Back

April 7, 2017

When Donald Trump threatened on the campaign trail to deport every single immigrant living in the country illegally, bring back offshore drilling and reverse the anti-pollution policies that help clear smoggy skies, **Californians immediately understood that our state would be disproportionately affected — and disproportionately harmed — by the reckless policies he was hoping to enact.**

After he was sworn in, he went further, singling out the state for attack. “California,” Trump declared in February, “in many ways is out of control.” In one overwrought tweet, he suggested that the federal government should cut all funding for UC Berkeley because a protest against a conservative guest speaker had turned violent. A few days later, he declared — even more irresponsibly — that he would “defund” the entire state if he felt it wasn’t cooperating sufficiently in his efforts to root out undocumented immigrants.

Trump had already alienated many state voters with **his plans to build a costly and unnecessary border wall, revoke the health insurance of millions of low-income people and gut climate-change policies.** Now, he was taking on California itself, a state in which more than one out of 10 Americans live, and which sends more than $350 billion to Washington each year in federal taxes (and gets substantially less than that back). A state with strong progressive values that it will not happily see undermined.

To express their dissatisfaction, hundreds of thousands of people gathered at rallies in the state’s major cities. One man’s quixotic California secession campaign became a cause célèbre. And California’s political leaders vowed to fight back.

Gov. Jerry Brown grumbled that if Trump cut climate data-gathering efforts, California would launch its “own damn satellite.” Legislators put former U.S. Atty. Gen Eric Holder on a hefty retainer to help challenge Trump’s initiatives in court even before he’d announced any. They filed a mountain of bills reacting to an array of reprehensible policies that the new president was thought to be considering. “We’re going to do what we need to do to protect the people of California,” said state Atty. Gen. Xavier Becerra.

The initial response of state leaders — which included some good ideas along with a bit of flailing and a touch of panic — was understandable given the enormity of the threat. But as we settle in for the next four years, California needs to be clear-eyed about the challenges it faces and strategic about how it responds. An all-out war with the federal government is neither sustainable nor wise. The state will have to choose its battles.

For starters, **California should continue to pursue its agenda on human and civil rights, on clean air, water and climate change, and on equality**. Trump can dismantle the federal Clean Power Plan, but he can’t stop the state from moving toward its renewable energy goal of 50% by 2030 as laid out in SB 350 two years ago. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency can reduce national fuel efficiency standards, but if it seeks to revoke California’s waiver that lets the state set its own, tougher rules, state lawmakers should fight back, including taking the agency to court if necessary. Trump can continue his counterproductive and mean-spirited efforts to deport non-criminal immigrants living in the country illegally, but the state’s local law enforcement agencies are not legally required to do the feds’ job for them; they should not.

California’s political leaders should reach out to other states — including red ones — to develop alliances on issues of common concern. Trump’s contempt for renewable energy resources, the reform of marijuana laws and the expansion of Medicaid, for instance, will surely alienate officials in other state capitols. Smoggy skies aren’t unique to Los Angeles, and western states have already shown interest in investing in renewable energy.

However, California lawmakers must also be careful about allowing the “resist at all costs” mentality to push them further than they ought to go.

Consider the biggest California vs. Trump fight so far: immigration. It is true that local police and sheriff’s deputies should not be turned into immigration agents, doing work that properly belongs to the federal government and which would hamper their ability to work effectively with immigrant communities. But neither should the state, in its zeal to resist Trump, throw up obstacles to cooperation that would protect serious criminals from deportation. Early versions of SB 54 — the so-called sanctuary state bill that would spell out how local police agencies should work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents — allowed the state to make policing decisions that have traditionally been made locally, could have goaded ICE agents into even more harmful immigration sweeps and, potentially, made it harder to keep violent criminals off the streets.

Many Californians are extremely — and rationally — pessimistic about the next few years under President Trump. But here’s another hard truth: If and when there are opportunities for reasonable collaboration with the new administration, the state must be prepared to take them. California relies on the federal government for **$105 billion** in aid each year, money it badly needs. Total noncooperation is not an option. Besides, Sacramento and Washington, D.C., have certain mutual interests: If the president wants shovel-ready infrastructure projects to fund, we have plenty.

That means keeping open the lines of communication, as both Gov. Brown and Mayor Eric Garcetti seem eager to do. With luck, Trump will in turn recognize that the state’s big industries — tech, agriculture, entertainment, tourism — are immensely important to the national economy.

If California suffers at the hands of Trump’s policies, so will the rest of the nation.

The reality is that California cannot go it alone. Let’s stop fantasizing about “Calexit.” As fun as it may be to imagine California taking its giant, job-creating, climate-protecting, immigrant-friendly economy and building its own nation, history suggests that would be neither wise nor feasible. California is an integral part of the United States, where it should remain, staying actively engaged.

In the days ahead, we **Californians must stand up to protect our nation and defend our state**. We must read, write and protest. Attend meetings and speak out honestly to those in power. We must vote. Not just for president, but for school board as well. Stand up for the rule of law and the democratic process while also opposing the dangerous policies of America’s new leader.

For the next four years, we must cooperate when it is possible, but fight back when it is necessary in the interests of our state and the union to which it belongs.

# Out of 47 Major Editorials on Trump’s Syria Strikes, Only One Opposed

By Adam Johnson

FAIR

Of the top 100 US newspapers, 47 ran editorials on President Donald Trump’s Syria airstrikes last week: 39 in favor, seven ambiguous and only one opposed to the military attack.

In other words, **83 percent of editorials** on the Syria attack supported Trump’s bombing, 15 percent took an ambivalent position and 2 percent said the attack shouldn’t have happened. Polls showed the US public being much more split: Gallup (4/7–8/17) and ABC/Washington Post (4/7–9/17) each had **51 percent supporting the airstrikes** and 40 percent opposed, while CBS (4/7–9/17) found **57 percent in favor** and 36 percent opposed.

A list of the editorials with quotes showing support or opposition can be seen here. The list of the top 100 editorial boards in the country was taken from a 2016 Hill piece (10/5/16) on presidential election endorsements.

Eight out of the top ten newspapers by circulation backed the airstrikes; the **Wall Street Journal** (4/7/17), **New York Times** (4/7/17), USA Today (4/7/17), New York Daily News (4/8/17), **Washington Post** (4/7/17), New York Post (4/10/17), Chicago Sun-Times (4/7/17) and Denver Post (4/7/17) all supported the strikes with varying degrees of qualification and concern.

The **San Jose Mercury News** (4/7/17) and **LA Times** (4/8/17) were ambiguous, highlighting Trump’s past opposition to bombing Syria and insisting, in the Mercury News’ words, that he get “serious about setting policies and pursuing diplomacy.”

The one editorial that expressly opposed the attack, in the 15th-ranked **Houston Chronicle** (4/7/17), did so mainly on constitutional—not moral or geopolitical—grounds, writing, “As we said a year-and-a-half ago, the president cannot and should not use military force against Syria without a legislative framework.”

The Chronicle—like all of the editorials on the list—accepted the government of Bashar al-Assad’s guilt in the April 4 chemical attack on Khan Shaykhun, omitting qualifiers such as “alleged” or “accused.”

A consistent theme in the bulk of the editorials was that the airstrikes were necessary, but Trump needed a broader strategy as well as a constitutional or congressional “framework.” As FAIR (4/7/17) noted last week, the editorial and op-ed pages of top five newspapers in the country were uniformly in support of the airstrikes in the day after the attack, offering up 18 positive columns and zero critical.

Some spoke in emotional or visceral terms, most notably the New York Times (4/7/17), which insisted “**it was hard not to feel some sense of emotional satisfaction**” at the attack. “The US decision to launch cruise missiles at Syrian President Bashar Assad’s airfield felt good,“ the Denver Post (4/7/17) wrote.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (4/9/17) seemed giddy to the point of incoherence with Trump’s new tough-guy posture, publishing this string of NatSec bromides:

*The message for the Russian and Chinese leaders must be to stop using their murderous little proxies, Syria and North Korea, to poke and prod us. We don’t want any more wars, but we also showed with the attack on the Syrian air base that we will not put up with being trifled with by their little friends doing awful things like killing children with chemical weapons and waving missiles around. Russia and China need to get busy and put the reins on the Syrians and the North Koreans, now. The game is lethal and dangerous, and there is no good reason for it to continue*.

The overwhelming support for Trump’s Syria strikes—which open a whole new theater of potential war in the Middle East—is consistent with FAIR’s studies of media reaction to US military action. A 2003 FAIR survey (3/18/03) of television coverage in the run-up to the **invasion of Iraq**, for example, found “just **6 percent** of US sources were skeptics about the need for war. Just 3 of 393 sources were identified with anti-war activism.” As the US debated intervening in the civil war in **Libya**, pro-intervention op-eds outnumbered those opposed to or questioning intervention by **4-to-1 in the New York Times and Washington Post** (Extra!, 5/11).

Adam Johnson is a contributing analyst for FAIR.org. You can find him on Twitter at @AdamJohnsonNYC.

# Trump has signed 66 executive actions

msn.com

April 21, 2017

President Donald Trump's first months in office have been filled with a flurry of action, and he's just getting started.

The 45th president has signed 66 executive actions so far, with far-reaching effects on Americans' lives.

There are technically three types of executive actions, which each have different authority and effects, with executive orders holding the most prestige:

**Executive orders** are assigned numbers and published in the federal register, similar to laws passed by Congress, and typically direct members of the executive branch to follow a new policy or directive. Trump has issued 24 orders.

**Presidential memoranda** do not have to be published or numbered (though they can be), and usually delegate tasks that Congress has already assigned the president to members of the executive branch. Trump has issued 22 memoranda.

**Proclamations**: Finally, while some proclamations - like President Abraham Lincoln's emancipation proclamation - have carried enormous weight, most are ceremonial observances of federal holidays or awareness months. Trump has issued 20 proclamations.

Scholars have typically used the number of executive orders per term to measure how much presidents have exercised their power. George Washington only signed eight his entire time in office, according to the American Presidency Project, while FDR penned over 3,700.

In his two terms, President Barack Obama issued 277 executive orders, a total number on par with his modern predecessors, but the lowest per year average in 120 years. Trump, so far, has signed 24 executive orders in 89 days.

Here's a quick guide to the executive actions Trump has made so far, what they do, and how Americans have reacted to them:

## Executive Orders

Executive Order on April 18, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on **Buy American and Hire American**

Executive Order on March 31, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Establishing Enhanced Collection and Enforcement of Antidumping and Countervailing Duties and Violations of **Trade and Customs Laws**

Executive Order on March 31, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Providing an **Order of Succession** Within the Department of Justice

Executive Order on March 31, 2017

Presidential Executive Order Regarding the Omnibus Report on **Significant Trade Deficits**

Executive Order on March 29, 2017

Presidential Executive Order Establishing the President’s Commission on **Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis**

Executive Order on March 28, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Promoting **Energy Independence and Economic Growth**

Executive Order on March 27, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on the **Revocation of Federal Contracting Executive Orders**

Executive Order on March 13, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on a **Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch**

Executive Order on March 06, 2017

Executive Order **Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry** Into The United States

Executive Order on February 28, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on The White House Initiative to **Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities**

Executive Order on February 28, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Restoring the Rule of Law, Federalism, and Economic Growth by Reviewing the "**Waters of the United States**" Rule

Executive Order on February 24, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing the **Regulatory Reform Agenda**

Executive Order on February 09, 2017

Providing an Order of **Succession Within the Department of Justice**

Executive Order on February 09, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to **Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking**

Executive Order on February 09, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on **Preventing Violence Against Federal, State, Tribal, and Local Law Enforcement Officers**

Executive Order on February 09, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on a Task Force on **Crime Reduction and Public Safety**

Executive Order on February 03, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on **Core Principles** for Regulating the United States Financial System

Executive Order on January 30, 2017

Presidential Executive Order on **Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs**

Executive Order on January 28, 2017

Executive Order: **ETHICS COMMITMENTS** BY EXECUTIVE BRANCH APPOINTEES

Executive Order on January 27, 2017

EXECUTIVE ORDER: PROTECTING THE NATION FROM **FOREIGN TERRORIST ENTRY** INTO THE UNITED STATES

Executive Order on January 25, 2017

Executive Order: **Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements**

Executive Order on January 25, 2017

Executive Order: **Enhancing Public Safety** in the Interior of the United States

Executive Order on January 24, 2017

Executive Order **Expediting Environmental Reviews and Approvals For High Priority Infrastructure Projects**

Executive Order on January 20, 2017

Executive Order **Minimizing the Economic Burden** of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Pending Repeal

## Presidential Memoranda

Presidential Memorandum on April 20, 2017

A Letter from the President to **Certain Congressional Committee Chairs**

Presidential Memorandum on April 20, 2017

Presidential Memorandum for the **Secretary of Commerce**

Presidential Memorandum on April 12, 2017

Memorandum for the **Director of the Federal Bureau**

Presidential Memorandum on April 11, 2017

A Letter from the President to the **President of the Senate**

Presidential Memorandum on April 08, 2017

A Letter from the President to the **Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate**

Presidential Memorandum on April 03, 2017

Memorandum for the **National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service**

Presidential Memorandum on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2, 2017 as **World Autism Awareness Day**

Presidential Memorandum on March 27, 2017

Presidential Memorandum on The **White House Office of American Innovation**

Presidential Memorandum on March 23, 2017

Message to the Congress Regarding the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to **South Sudan**

Presidential Memorandum on March 23, 2017

Notice Regarding the Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to **South Sudan**

Presidential Memorandum on March 20, 2017

Presidential Memorandum on the **Delegation of Authority** Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017

Presidential Memorandum on March 16, 2017

Text of a Letter from the President to the **Speaker of the House** of Representatives

Presidential Memorandum on March 06, 2017

Memorandum for the **Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security**

Presidential Memorandum on February 03, 2017

Presidential Memorandum on **Fiduciary Duty Rule**

Presidential Memorandum on January 28, 2017

Presidential Memorandum **Organization** of the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council

Presidential Memorandum on January 28, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Plan to Defeat the **Islamic State of Iraq and Syria**

Presidential Memorandum on January 27, 2017

Presidential Memorandum on **Rebuilding the U.S. Armed Forces**

Presidential Memorandum on January 24, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Streamlining Permitting and Reducing **Regulatory Burdens** for Domestic Manufacturing

Presidential Memorandum on January 24, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding **Construction of American Pipelines**

Presidential Memorandum on January 24, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding **Construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline**

Presidential Memorandum on January 24, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding **Construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline**

Presidential Memorandum on January 23, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding the **Mexico City Policy**

Presidential Memorandum on January 23, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding Withdrawal of the United States from the **Trans-Pacific Partnership Negotiations and Agreement**

Presidential Memorandum on January 23, 2017

Presidential Memorandum Regarding the **Hiring Freeze**

Presidential Memorandum on January 20, 2017

Memorandum for the **Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies**

## Proclamations

Proclamation on April 14, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 15 through April 23, 2017, as **National Park Week**

Proclamation on April 07, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 9, 2017, as **National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day**

Proclamation on April 07, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 14, 2017, as **Pan American Day** and April 9 through April 15, 2017, as **Pan American Week**

Proclamation on April 06, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 7, 2017, as **Education and Sharing Day**, U.S.A.

Proclamation on April 05, 2017

A Proclamation by President Donald J. Trump Honoring the **Memory of John Glenn**

Proclamation on April 03, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2 through April 8, 2017, as **National Crime Victims' Rights Week**

Proclamation on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2017 as **National Donate Life Month**

Proclamation on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2017 as **National Financial Capability Month**

Proclamation on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2017 as **National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month**

Proclamation on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2017 as **National Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Proclamation on March 31, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims April 2017 as **Cancer Control Month**

Proclamation on March 24, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 25, 2017, as **Greek Independence Day**: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy

Proclamation on March 17, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 19 through March 25, 2017, as **National Poison Prevention Week**

Proclamation on March 06, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 5 through March 11, 2017, as **National Consumer Protection Week**

Proclamation on March 01, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 2017 as **Irish-American Heritage Month**

Proclamation on March 01, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 2017 as **American Red Cross Month**

Proclamation on March 01, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims March 2017 as **Women's History Month**

Proclamation on February 02, 2017

President Donald J. Trump Proclaims February as **American Heart Month**

Proclamation on January 26, 2017

**National School Choice Week** 2017 Proclamation

# Robert Reich on Trump’s First 100 days

April 23, 2014

Trump's failure to accomplish little or any of his agenda during his first 100 days is striking. But I think it also important to focus on the **vast harm he has done** in this comparatively short time -- especially his degradation of the presidency.

From early in the Republic, we have looked at the office of the presidency as a focal point for the nation's values. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, and his Teddy's fifth cousin, Franklin, are studied by school children as both exemplars of what it means to be president and of **the moral authority of the presidency**. It is not merely what they accomplished, but how they did it; not just their policies but their principled ways of pulling them off.

True, many of our presidents have fallen short of those ideals. But the sadness or rebuke engendered by their failures reveals the high standard we had come to expect from our presidents, and the value we place on the office of the presidency.

But not until Trump has the moral authority of the office disappeared.

I'm old enough to recall when John F. Kennedy invited the world's great artists, writers, and philosophers to dine at the White House. The nation felt ennobled. Donald Trump invites Sarah Palin and Ted Nugent, who once called President Obama a "mongrel," and we feel sullied.

But it has not been just Trump's vulgarity.

There have also been Trump's **lies** -- blatant, continuous, unsubstantiated, even after the lack of evidence has been pointed out repeatedly. They are lies that deepen Americans' suspicion of one another and undermine our confidence in our system of government, such as his repeated contention that "three to five million" people voted illegally in the last election, or that Obama spied on Trump during the campaign.

Prior presidents have embellished the truth or, occasionally, lied about a particular important thing, such as the existence of weapons of mass destruction. But before Trump we have never before had a president who chronically lies, whose lies have become an integral part of his presidency even in the first 100 days.

There has also been **Trump's vast family business** -- from which he continues to benefit, even though the decisions he makes in office affect the money he makes off of them, and foreign governments cater to them in order to curry favor. He shrugs off such conflicts, even refusing to release his tax returns, even inviting his daughter and son-in-law, each with their own businesses and conflicts of interest, to join him at the highest reaches of the White House.

Some presidents have profited from their presidencies after they leave office, through large speaking fees. But never before Trump have we had a president for whom conflicts of financial interest during his presidency are so flagrant yet so ignored.

The first 100 days has also been marked by **Trump's divisiveness** -- turning Americans against each other, legitimizing hatefulness toward Mexican-Americans and Muslim-Americans and African-Americans, fueling violence between his supporters and his opponents.

We have had divisive elections before. But after them, other presidents have sought to bring us together. Even after the horrors of the Civil War, Lincoln famously asked us to rejoin without malice. Trump seems to delight in creating and and encouraging warring camps -- calling his opponents "enemies," and staging rallies only for his bedrock supporters.

There has also been Trump's necessary **cruelty** -- toward refugees, undocumented immigrants, and the poor among us. He has issued a budget that would deeply harm the least advantaged Americans, and supported a repeal of the Affordable Care Act that would also hurt those most in need.

He has refused asylum to refugees at a time when the world faces the largest refugee crisis since World War II, and unleashed immigration enforcers on 11 million people who are not authorized to be in America but many of whom have been productive members of their communities for years. He has even deported people who have been here since childhood and know no other nation.

Other presidents have on occasion been hard and cruel. But **Trump has evinced a cruelty that defies reason, a cruelty that has no basis in fact and is utterly unnecessary**.

There has been Trump's affect on the rest of the world **-- legitimizing crude nationalism and hateful xenophobia,** as evinced by France's Marine Le Pen, **encouraging dictators and authoritarians, such as Turkey's Erdogan, while confusing our allies and friends.**

Finally, there is Donald Trump himself -- who in the first 100 days as president has shown himself to be **narcissistic, compassionless, xenophobic, paranoid, vindictive, and thin-skinned; who takes credit for the work of others and blames others for his own failings; who lashes out at the press and journalists when they criticize him, and who demonizes judges who disagree with him.**

We have before had presidents such as Richard Nixon and Warren G. Harding, whose personality defects harmed their presidencies and tainted the office of the president. But Donald Trump is in a different league altogether. He exhibits the opposite of every civic virtue ever encouraged in our school rooms, town halls, and churches.

The first 100 days is an artificial landmark for presidents. But it does offer an opportunity to pause and assess their accomplishments. Too often, though, we think in the narrow gauge of policies and legislation.

With Trump, it's important to think more broadly. Among the biggest legacies of his first 100 days is his **degrading of the moral authority of the office of the president**, and, thereby, of America.

# THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Tracking President Trump’s campaign promises

By PRIYA KRISHNAKUMAR, MALOY MOORE, MELISSA LEU, COLLEEN SHALBY AND DAVID LAUTER

APRIL 26, 2017

Los Angeles Times

As President Trump nears the 100-day milestone, we take a look at what he’s accomplished to see whether his campaign promises held up.

4 promises kept

9 promises in progress

9 promises stalled

5 promises abandoned

4 promises scaled back

## Healthcare

KEY PROMISE:

Repeal and replace Obamacare - Progress stalled

Promise: Repeal and replace Obamacare - Current status: Stalled

"It will be repeal and replace. It will be essentially simultaneously. It will be various segments, you understand, but will most likely be on the same day or the same week, but probably the same day. Could be the same hour."

—Trump, in the weeks leading up to his inauguration

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 47

Trump backs a bill proposed by the House GOP leadership that would have repealed Obamacare, cut Medicaid, created a new system to subsidize health insurance premiums and provided a large tax cut to upper-income taxpayers.

Day 64

House leaders cancel a planned vote on the measure after failing to win support from enough House Republicans to pass it. White House officials and GOP leaders have continued to negotiate, but still lack a majority.

Day 97

Roughly 40 members of the House Freedom Caucus now support the White House's latest version of the healthcare plan. About 50 moderate Republicans still oppose or are uncertain.

## Immigration

KEY PROMISES:

Deport immigrants in the country illegally - In progress

Build a wall on the southern border - Progress stalled

Create a travel ban and institute extreme vetting - Progress stalled

End some funding for sanctuary cities - Promise scaled back

Revoke President Obama’s DACA program - Promise abandoned

Promise: Deport people in the country illegally - Current status: In progress

"What we are going to do is get the people that are criminal and have criminal records, gang members, drug dealers, where a lot of these people, probably 2 million, it could be even 3 million, we are getting them out of our country or we are going to incarcerate."

—Trump, on CBS News in November

**What’s happened so far**:

Ongoing

Immigration officials have increased the number of unauthorized immigrants in detention to roughly the level that the Obama administration maintained in 2014. The increased number of detentions is expected to yield higher levels of deportations later this year, although so far the actual number of deportations is lower than in 2016.

Day 19

We report a surge in deportations of “Dreamers” who have lost their protected status.

**Promise: Build a wall on the southern border**

Current status: Stalled

"I will build a great wall — and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me — and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words."

—Trump, at the start of his campaign in June 2015

What’s happened so far:

Day 56

Trump has requested $2.6 billion to begin construction. Congress seems unlikely to approve the money in a spending bill that must pass by the end of April to avoid a government shutdown.

Day 76

Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly concedes in congressional testimony that the administration did not plan to build a wall “from sea to shining sea.”

Promise: **Create a travel ban and institute extreme vetting**

Current status: Stalled

"I am establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America."

—Trump, at the signing of the executive order in January

**What’s happened so far:**

Day 8

Trump issues an executive order imposing a temporary travel ban on residents of seven mostly Muslim countries.

Day 46

He issues a revised, narrower order that would affect six countries.

Day 59

The revised order is also blocked, pending hearings by at least two federal appeals courts. The first hearing is scheduled for May.

Promise: **End some funding for sanctuary cities**

Current status: Scaled back

"We will end the sanctuary cities that have resulted in so many needless deaths."

—Trump, in a campaign speech in Phoenix

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 6

Trump issues an executive order that threatens to take certain Justice Department grants away from some cities that fail to comply with immigration orders. The administration has not defined which cities might be considered sanctuaries. Only a small category of Justice Department grant programs is now at risk.

Day 92

The Justice Department warns the California prison system as well as the cities of Chica-go, New Or-leans, Phil-adelphia, Las Ve-gas, Miami, Mil-wau-kee and New York and Cook County, Ill., to cooperate with its immigration policy. Seattle has already filed a lawsuit challenging the administration’s threat to deny funds.

Day 96

A federal judge blocked Trump’s order to take away funds from municipal governments that don’t cooperate with the administration’s immigration policy.

Promise: **Revoke President Obama’s DACA program**

Current status: Abandoned

"We will immediately terminate President Obama’s two illegal executive amnesties, in which he defied federal law and the constitution to give amnesty to approximately 5 million illegal immigrants."

—Trump, in a campaign policy speech on immigration, August 2016

**What’s happened so far**:

Ongoing

The Department of Homeland Security continues to approve applications for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). Trump’s advisors are divided over what to do about the program, but Trump appears to have decided not to end it. The administration has, however, deported more people who have lost their DACA protection. As The Times reported, of the roughly 750,000 people protected under DACA, 43 have been deported so far this year after losing their protection because of criminal convictions or alleged gang activity. The Obama administration deported 365 over a four-year period.

## The environment

KEY PROMISES:

Lift restrictions on production of oil, shale energy and coal - In progress

Allow energy infrastructure projects to move forward - In progress

Cancel payments to U.N. climate change programs - In progress

Promise: Lift restrictions on production of oil, shale energy and coal - Current status: In progress

"I will cancel job-killing restrictions on the production of American energy, including shale energy and clean coal, creating many millions of high-paying jobs."

—Donald Trump, in a YouTube message delivered after the election

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 1

Trump releases his “America First Energy Plan”

Day 68

In an executive order, Trump tells the government to start dismantling Obama’s climate change policies. Under the order, the government will abandon use of the “social cost of carbon” that regulators had calculated and factored into decisions on permit applications and rule-making. Restrictions on methane releases at oil and gas drilling facilities would be eased. Agencies will also stop contemplating effects on climate as they launch into new projects, and restrictions on coal leasing and fracking on federal lands will be lifted. Many parts of the policy face litigation.

Promise: **Allow energy infrastructure projects to move forward**

Current status: In progress

"We will build our own pipeline, we will build our own pipes, like we used to, in the old days."

—Trump, signing an executive order in January

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 5

Trump signs the order to revive the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines.

Day 64

The Trump administration approves a permit for construction of the Keystone pipeline, but the project must overcome several economic hurdles before construction can begin.

Promise: **Cancel payments to U.N. climate change programs**

Current status: In progress

"We’re going to put America first. That includes canceling billions in climate change spending for the United Nations."

—Trump, at a rally in Warren, Mich.

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 56

In his budget, released March 16, Trump proposes that the government “cease payments to the United Nations’ (UN) climate change programs by eliminating U.S. funding related to the Green Climate Fund and its two precursor Climate Investment Funds.”

## National security

KEY PROMISES:

Increase the size of the U.S. military - In progress

Renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal - Progress stalled

Reverse the Obama administration’s normalization of relations with Cuba - Progress stalled

Move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv - Progress stalled

Promise: **Increase the size of the U.S. military**

Current status: In progress

"As soon as I take office, I will ask Congress to fully eliminate the defense sequester and will submit a new budget to rebuild our military. It is so depleted. We will rebuild our military."

—Trump, in a speech at the Union League of Philadelphia

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 39

Trump proposes spending an additional $54 billion on the military, an increase of about 10%.

Day 56

Trump officially unveils his budget blueprint with a military spending increase.

Latest

Some Democrats have indicated they would support more money for defense, but only if the administration backs off spending cuts for domestic programs.

Promise: **Renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal**

Current status: Stalled

"Never ever, ever in my life have I seen any transaction so incompetently negotiated as our deal with Iran. And I mean never."

—Trump, in a 2015 speech at a tea party rally on the Iran nuclear agreement

**What’s happened so far**:

Before inauguration, Jan. 11

Rex Tillerson calls for a “full review” of the Iran deal.

Day 89

Now confirmed as Secretary of State, Tillerson certifies to Congress that Iran is complying with the terms of the nuclear deal that the Obama administration signed in July 2015. Trump has taken no steps to renegotiate it.

Promise: **Reverse the Obama administration’s normalization of relations with Cuba**

Current status: Stalled

"All of the concessions that Barack Obama has granted the Castro regime were done through executive order, which means the next president can reverse them — and that is what I will do, unless the Castro regime meets our demands. Those demands will include religious and political freedom for the Cuban people."

—Trump, at a campaign rally in Florida, September 2016

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 15

Press Secretary Sean Spicer says the White House is reviewing relations with Cuba. So far, the administration has taken no steps to change Obama’s policy.

Promise: **Move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv**

Current status: Stalled

"We will move the American Embassy to the eternal capital of the Jewish people, Jerusalem."

—Trump, in a speech to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, March 2016

**What’s happened so far:**

Day 4

Press Secretary Sean Spicer says no decision has been made.

Day 14

Trump meets with Jordan’s King Abdullah, who urges him not to take any sudden steps to move the embassy. Since then, the administration has taken no further steps.

## Supreme Court

KEY PROMISE:

Fill the vacancy on the court with a conservative justice - Promise kept

Promise: **Fill the vacancy on the court with a conservative justice**

Current status: Promise kept

"I got it done in the first 100 days!"

—Trump, after Neil M. Gorsuch is sworn in

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 12

Trump nominates Judge Gorsuch to the Supreme Court

Day 47

The Senate confirms Gorsuch by a vote of 54 to 45.

## The economy

KEY PROMISES:

Pull out of Trans-Pacific Partnership - Promise kept

Reform the U.S. tax system - In progress

Reduce regulations - In progress

Bring back jobs - In progress

Invest in infrastructure - Progress stalled

Require new pipelines to be made with American steel - Progress stalled

Renegotiate or withdraw from NAFTA - Promise scaled back

Dismantle the Dodd-Frank financial reform law - Promise scaled back

Label China as a currency manipulator - Promise abandoned

Promise: **Pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership**

Current status: Promise kept

"I am going to withdraw the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which has not yet been ratified."

—Trump, in prepared remarks for a campaign speech in Monessen, Pa.

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 4

Trump announces that the U.S. is pulling out of TPP. The proposed trade treaty was already considered dead by then.

Promise: **Reform the U.S. tax system**

Current status: In progress

"My economic team is developing historic tax reform that will reduce the tax rate on our companies so they can compete and thrive anywhere and with anyone.... At the same time, we will provide massive tax relief for the middle class."

—Trump, in his Joint Address to Congress

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 35

Treasury Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin says he has an “ambitious timeline” to have a tax reform package passed by August.

Day 88

Mnuchin admits tax reform will be “probably delayed a bit,” but says he still expects it to happen this year. He blames delays on the failed effort to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Day 92

Trump says he plans to unveil some form of a tax plan before his first 100 days ends.

Day 97

White House reveals dramatic plan to overhaul the tax code and drastically reduce tax rates. It would cut the tax brackets from seven to three. The proposal was met with skepticism from budget groups.

Promise: **Reduce regulations**

Current status: In progress

"For every new federal regulation, two existing regulations must be eliminated. Regulations are killing our country and our jobs."

—Trump, in a speech on Oct. 22

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 1

White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus issues a memorandum instructing heads of executive departments and agencies to freeze all new or pending regulations.

Day 11

Trump signs an executive order requiring that for every new regulation issued, at least two existing regulations need to be identified for elimination.

Day 36

Trump signs an executive order requiring that every agency, within 60 days, form “a regulatory reform task force” to identify regulations for repeal.

Promise: **Bring back jobs**

Current status: In progress

"I said I will be the greatest jobs producer that God ever created, and I mean that."

—Trump in January, at his first news conference since winning the election

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 8

Trump announces a manufacturing jobs initiative to bring together business leaders to talk about job creation. The group includes people from Dow Chemical, General Electric, Ford and other major companies.

Day 15

Trump’s business advisory council meets for the first time.

Day 50

The jobs report for the first full month of the Trump administration shows the economy added 98,000 net new jobs in February, the lowest level of job growth in nearly a year. The White House notes that the unemployment rate fell two-tenths of a point to the lowest level in nearly a decade.

Latest

Several companies, including Carrier, Wal-Mart and Hyundai, have announced plans to create American jobs or move them back to U.S. soil. While some of those announcements came after meetings with Trump, many were planned before Trump took office.

Promise: **Invest in infrastructure**

Current status: Stalled

"I will be asking the Congress to approve legislation that produces a $1-trillion investment in the infrastructure of the United States — financed through both public and private capital — creating millions of new jobs."

—Trump, in his Joint Address to Congress

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 91

Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said a $200-billion infrastructure development plan is in the works and could be proposed in the fall. He suggested that the eventual total spending would be $1 trillion.

Promise: **Require new pipelines to be made with American steel**

Current status: Stalled

"I am very insistent that if we’re going to build pipelines in the United States, the pipe should be made in the United States."

—Trump, signing the executive order to revive the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines in January

**What’s happened so far:**

Day 5

Trump signs a presidential memorandum that he says will require pipelines to be made with American steel.

Day 43

White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Saunders tells reporters the steel order won’t apply to the Keystone pipeline because its owner bought the pipe to build the line several years ago.

Latest

Administration officials tell The Times that Trump’s words were a “suggestion,” not an order. The memorandum Trump signed tells the Commerce Department to study the issue, but the government appears to have no legal authority to tell private pipeline companies what steel to buy.

Promise: **Renegotiate or withdraw from NAFTA**

Current status: Scaled back

"I'm going tell our NAFTA partners that I intend to immediately renegotiate the terms of that agreement to get a better deal for our workers."

—Trump, in prepared remarks for campaign speech in Monessen, Pa.

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 70

News reports reveal that the administration told Congress in a draft negotiating proposal that it will seek some changes in the North American Free Trade Agreement, but not large-scale ones. It dropped any mention of tariffs or punitive measures against Mexico.

Promise: **Dismantle the Dodd-Frank financial reform law**

Current status: Scaled back

"Dodd-Frank has made it impossible for bankers to function.… It makes it very hard for bankers to loan money for people to create jobs, for people with businesses to create jobs. And that has to stop."

—Trump, in an interview with Reuters in May 2016

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 92

Trump signs executive memos calling for a review of two specific provisions of the law. But administration officials have backed away from talk of dismantling it.

Promise: **Label China as a currency manipulator**

Current status: Abandoned

"I am going to instruct my Treasury secretary to label China a currency manipulator. Any country that devalues their currency in order to take unfair advantage of the United States will be met with sharply, and that includes tariffs and taxes."

—Trump, in prepared remarks for a campaign speech in Monessen, Pa.

**What’s happened so far:**

Day 83

Trump says his administration won’t label China a currency manipulator. He tells the Wall Street Journal that he changed his mind, admitting what outside experts had said all along — that China had long since stopped manipulating its currency.

## ‘Drain the swamp’

KEY PROMISES:

5-year ban on White House and Congressional officials becoming lobbyists after leaving government - Promise kept

Lifetime ban on White House officials lobbying on behalf of a foreign government - Promise kept

Constitutional amendment to impose term limits on all members of Congress - Promise abandoned

Hiring freeze on all federal employees - Promise abandoned

Ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections - Promise abandoned

Promise: **5-year ban on White House and congressional officials becoming lobbyists after leaving government**

Current status: Promise kept

"First, I'm going to reinstitute a five-year ban on all executive branch officials lobbying the government for five years after they leave government service. I'm going to ask Congress to pass this ban into law so that it cannot be lifted by executive order, right. Second, I'm going to ask Congress to institute its own five-year ban on lobbying by former members of Congress and their staffs."

—Trump, at a campaign rally in Washington, D.C.

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 9

Trump signs a executive order that bans administration appointees from lobbying their former agency for five years after they terminate their employment. The order was in several ways weaker than a similar ban President Obama imposed on his administration.

Promise: **Lifetime ban on White House officials lobbying on behalf of a foreign government**

Current status: Promise kept

"I'm going to issue a lifetime ban against senior executive branch officials lobbying on behalf of a foreign government."

—Trump, at a campaign rally in Washington, D.C.

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 9

Trumps signs an executive order that prohibits executive branch appointees from engaging in any activity on behalf of any foreign government.

Promise: **Constitutional amendment to impose term limits on members of Congress**

Current status: Abandoned

"If I'm elected president, I will push for a constitutional amendment to impose term limits on all members of Congress."

—Trump, at a campaign rally in Colorado Springs, Colo.

**What’s happened so far**:

Latest

Trump has not mentioned this idea since the campaign ended, and it has little support in Congress.

Promise: **Hiring freeze on all federal employees**

Current status: Abandoned

"We want to empower [my Cabinet] to make their agencies as lean and effective as possible and they know how to do it. Today there is duplication and redundancy everywhere. Billions and billions of dollars are being wasted."

—Trump, after signing the executive order in January

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 4

Trump signs a memorandum initiating a hiring freeze across the federal government, with the exception of the military.

Day 83

The hiring freeze is rescinded. It had been blamed for worsening backlogs at veterans hospitals and Social Security offices.

Promise: **Ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections**

Current status: Abandoned

"I'm going to ask Congress to pass a campaign finance reform that prevents registered foreign lobbyists from raising money in American elections and politics."

—Trump, at a campaign rally in Washington, D.C.

**What’s happened so far**:

Latest

Trump has not mentioned this idea since the campaign, and the administration has made no campaign finance reform proposals.

## Social policy

**KEY PROMISES**:

Defund Planned Parenthood - In progress

**Make child care and elder care more affordable**

Promise stalled

**School choice**

Promise scaled back

Promise: **Defund Planned Parenthood**

Current status: In progress

"I would defund it because of the abortion factor, which they say is 3%. I don't know what percentage it is. They say it's 3%. But I would defund it, because I'm pro-life."

—Trump, at a Republican presidential debate in February 2016

**What’s happened so far**:

Day 83

Trump signs into law a measure that allows states to withhold money from Planned Parenthood. The law overturned a rule imposed by the Obama administration that prevented states from cutting Planned Parenthood out of health programs. Congress could vote later this year on efforts to end federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

Promise: **School choice**

Current status: Scaled back

"As I’ve often said — in my address to Congress and just about anyplace else I can speak — education is the civil rights issue of our time. And it’s why I’ve asked Congress to support a school choice bill."

—Trump, visiting a Roman Catholic school in Florida in March

**What’s happened so far:**

Day 56

In his budget for next year, Trump proposed $1.4 billion as a down payment on a school voucher program that would eventually ramp up to $20 billion. It’s unclear whether Congress will approve the money.

Promise: **Make child care and elder care more affordable**

Current status: Stalled

"My administration wants to work with members in both parties to make child care accessible and affordable."

—Trump, in his Joint Address to Congress

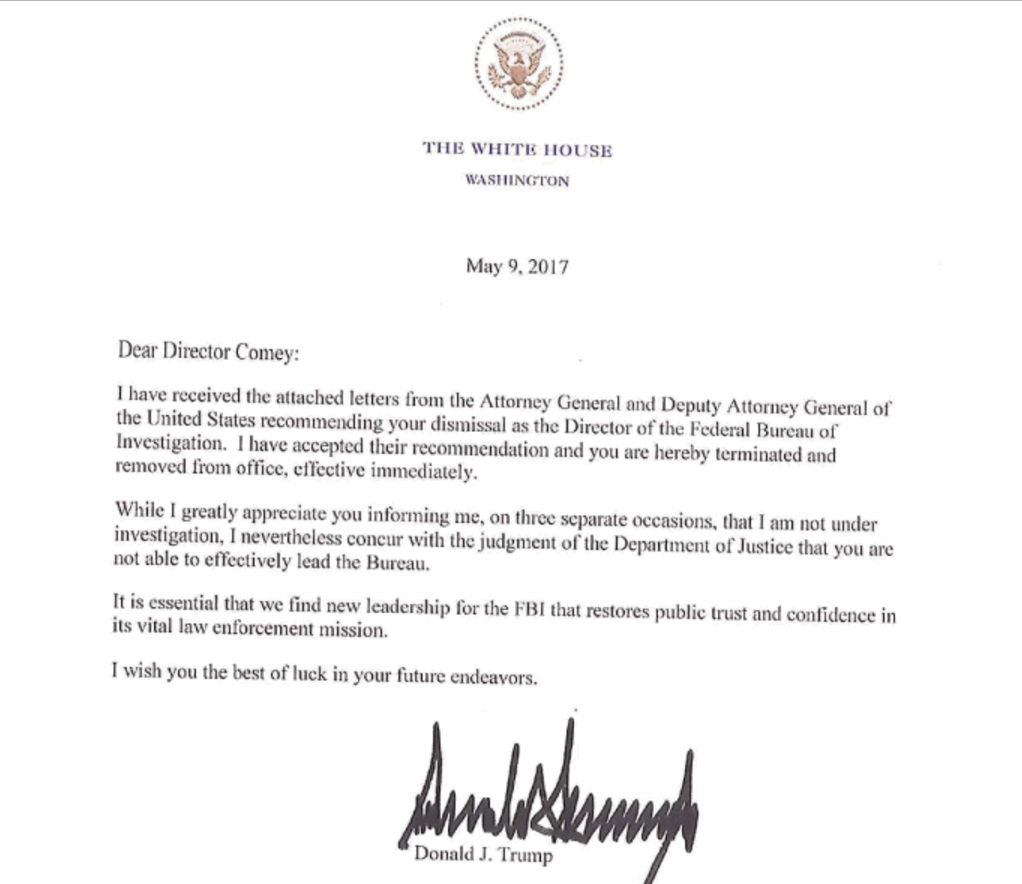
**What’s happened so far**:

Latest

Ivanka Trump has talked about the idea, but the president has said little about it, the administration has no proposal, and there’s no schedule for producing one.

Sources: Times reporting

# Trump Fires FBI Director Comey



On May 9, 2017, President Trump fired FBI Director James B. Comey. At the time of the firing, Comey was overseeing the investigation of the Trump campaign’s connection to possible Russian hacking attacks against the Hillary Clinton campaign. The big question of the day was whether Trump was attempting to derail the investigation in a tactic which reminds one of the Nixon attempts to stop the Watergate investigation. With that basic question, the next question concerned how long it will take to impeach Trump?

Trump claimed, at first, that the firing came as a result of Comey’s press conferences during the Clinton email investigation. If that were true, why did he wait so long for Trump to make his move?

In the clear Trump style of “everything is about me”, he wrote to Comey that “*While I greatly appreciate you* ***informing me, on three separate occasions****, that I am not under investigation, I nevertheless concur with the judgment of the Department of Justice that you are not able to effectively lead the bureau.*”

“*It is essential that we find new leadership for the FBI that restores public trust and confidence in its vital law enforcement mission*.”

A statement from the White House claimed that President Trump acted based on the clear recommendations of both Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and Attorney General Jeff Sessions. This is the same Jeff Sessions who has recused himself from the investigation into the Russian activities due to his own involvements with the Russians.

Questions remained concerning why did it come at this time, did it have to do with Comey’s request for more resoures to continue his investigation into Trump campaign involvement with the Russians during the campaign, or was it simply another assault on any federal government employee who is not seen as loyal to Trump?

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, for three days in a row, needed to adjust her story concerning the firing of Comey. The spokespersons for Trump continued to lie to the American people about why President Trump fired Director James Comey. The entire justification on Tuesday night when this happened, from Sarah Huckabee Sanders, deputy press secretary, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, and Counselor Kellyanne Conway, was about Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's letter. Later, President Trump stated that regardless of whatever the recommendation came from the deputy AG, **he was going to fire Jim Comey**. In short, another series of lies by the communications staff. President Trump, in an interview, threw his own team under the bus. Perhaps this will lead to an awareness by the vast majority of Americans that you can’t trust the President or anything that his team says.

# Americans Render Their Verdict: Trump An “Idiot,” “Incompetent,” and a “Liar.”

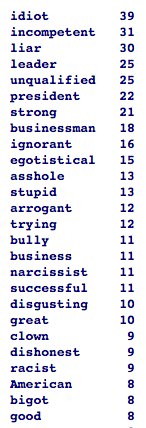
Quinnipac Poll

Daily Kos

By Dartaganan May 11, 2017

Last week Quinnipiac University asked registered voters in this country what the **first word** was that came to their mind when they thought about the current occupant in the White House.

The answer given more times than any other was **“idiot,”** followed by **“incompetent”**and **“liar.”**



Quinnipiac asked people what word first came to mind when they thought about Trump

Trump’s popularity is down to 36% in the latest Quinnipiac poll. This is 1% above his previous low-water mark of 35% on April 4th.

American voters’ feelings about what they voted into office last November are generally dismal across the board:It’s not just the approval rating. **Every number in this poll is bad.** The majority of Americans say Trump is “not honest,” lacks leadership skills, doesn’t care about average Americans, is not “level-headed,” and does not share their values. On the economy, immigration, foreign policy, and terrorism, more Americans disapprove than approve of the job he’s doing.

It also appears that the Trump/Bannon “fake news” accusations are wearing thin with most registered US voters:

When it comes to who Americans trust to tell them the truth,**57 percent say the media wins out over Trump**.

From the folks at Quinnipiac:

“*There is no way to spin or sugarcoat these sagging numbers," said Tim Malloy, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Poll.*

*"The erosion of white men, white voters without college degrees and independent voters, the****declaration by voters that President Donald Trump's first 100 days were mainly a failure****and deepening concerns about Trump's honesty, intelligence and level headedness are red flags that the administration simply can't brush away,"* Malloy added.

The poll suggests that Trump’s incompetence is also being reflected in voter preferences for the upcoming House elections in 2018:

By a 54 - 38 percent margin, American voters want the Democratic Party to win control of the U.S. House of Representatives**. This is the widest margin ever measured for this question in a Quinnipiac University poll, exceeding a 5 percentage point margin for Republicans in 2013.**

This poll was conducted before Trump fired the head of the FBI for investigating his campaign’s collusion with the Russian government and the potentially treasonous implications of such collusion. **So there is a bit of room left for him to drop**.

# President asked FBI director to shut down Flynn Russia investigation

By Hunter May 16, 2017

New York Times

Things seem to be quickly **spiraling out of control** for the Trump White House. This afternoon's breaking news? Donald Trump specifically asked now-fired FBI Director James Comey to shut down his investigation into [former national security adviser Michael T. Flynn](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/16/us/politics/james-comey-trump-flynn-russia-investigation.html?_r=0).

Mr. Comey wrote the memo detailing his conversation with the president immediately after the meeting, which took place the day after Mr. Flynn resigned, according to two people who read the memo. The memo was part of a **paper trail** Mr. Comey created documenting what he perceived as the president’s **improper efforts to influence an ongoing investigation**. An F.B.I. agent’s contemporaneous notes are widely held up in court as credible evidence of conversations. [...]

“I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go,” Mr. Trump told Mr. Comey, according to the memo. “***He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go***.”

Mr. Trump told Mr. Comey that Mr. Flynn had done nothing wrong, according to the memo.

The meeting in question, which was at the White House, was about two weeks after Trump allegedly **requested Comey's "loyalty"** during a dinner conversation.

That Donald Trump specifically requested the investigation into Flynn's Russia ties be "let go" is, obviously, incendiary. It demonstrates a **specific attempt to obstruct justice**. And let's not forget it pairs with a Trump campaign trail insistence that his opponent be charged with crimes—despite the FBI concluding the opposite.

Mr. Comey created similar memos — including some that are classified — about every phone call and meeting he had with the president, the two people said. It is unclear whether Mr. Comey told the Justice Department about the conversation or his memos.

For Comey to create a memo specifically documenting what he thought to be "improper efforts to influence an ongoing investigation" is, again, absolutely incendiary. There's no way Comey can avoid testifying before Congress now.

# Trump Drama Continues

**May 27, 2017**

**Politico**

**THE PORTRAIT: DRAMA. LOTS OF IT -- IN THE NEWS THIS MORNING:**Donald Trump's campaign has been asked to **turn over all Russia-related documents**. Jared Kushner had undisclosed contacts with the Russian ambassador. And the Russian ambassador discussed with Kushner a secret communication channel to Trump world. **THE PRESIDENT**is scheduled to return to the White House around 10:45 p.m.

**A DRUMBEAT OF SCOOPS ...**

**--WAPO: "Russian ambassador told Moscow that Kushner wanted secret communications channel with Kremlin,"** by Ellen Nakashima, Adam Entous and Greg Miller: "Jared Kushner and Russia's ambassador to Washington discussed the possibility of setting up a secret and secure communications channel between Trump's transition team and the Kremlin, using Russian diplomatic facilities in an apparent move to shield their pre-inauguration discussions from monitoring, according to U.S. officials briefed on intelligence reports.

**"Ambassador Sergey Kislyak**reported to his superiors in Moscow that Kushner, son-in-law and confidant to then-President-elect Trump, made the proposal during a meeting on Dec. 1 or 2 at Trump Tower, according to intercepts of Russian communications that were reviewed by U.S. officials. Kislyak said Kushner suggested using Russian diplomatic facilities in the United States for the communications. The meeting also was attended by **Michael Flynn**, Trump's first national security adviser.

**"The White House**disclosed the meeting only in March, playing down its significance. But people familiar with the matter say the FBI now considers the encounter, as well as another meeting Kushner had with a Russian banker, to be of investigative interest. Kislyak reportedly was taken aback by the suggestion of allowing an American to use Russian communications gear at its embassy or consulate - a proposal that would have carried security risks for Moscow as well as the Trump team." [http://wapo.st/2rrNteO](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b840a50b5a2663758655b4c9c520ed63abace6812a5943fc5158d28c1ddec7058bb7fc824fe339bfa86)

**-- BEHIND THE SCENES:**"The Post was first alerted in mid-December to the meeting by an anonymous letter, which said, among other things, that Kushner had talked to Kislyak about setting up the communications channel. This week, officials who reviewed the letter ... said the portion about the secret channel was consistent with their understanding of events."

**--@nycsouthpaw:**"Greg Miller says on MSNBC the anonymous letter came to Ellen Nakashima and appeared to have come from someone inside the transition."

**--NYT's Maggie Haberman, Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo:** "It is unclear who first proposed the communications channel, but the people familiar with the meeting said the idea was to have Mr. Flynn speak directly with a senior military official in Moscow to discuss Syria and other security issues. The communications channel was never set up, the people said."[http://nyti.ms/2qtJute](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b844261b7d2e45b10fad83f92aaa8e4ef6db52e09c88fd3fe3d2ba57636d1838eb9cc66007dea07825a)

**-- REUTERS: "Exclusive: Trump son-in-law had undisclosed contacts with Russian envoy - sources,"**by Ned Parker and Jonathan Landay: "President Donald Trump's son-in-law and close adviser, Jared Kushner, had at least three **previously undisclosed contacts** with the Russian ambassador to the United States during and after the 2016 presidential campaign, seven current and former U.S. officials told Reuters. Those contacts included two phone calls between April and November last year, two of the sources said. By early this year, Kushner had become a focus of the FBI investigation into whether there was any collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin, said two other sources - one current and one former law enforcement official.

**"Kushner initially had come to the attention** of FBI investigators last year as they began scrutinizing former national security adviser Michael Flynn's connections with Russian officials, the two sources said. ... After the Nov. 8 election, Kushner and Flynn also discussed with Kislyak the idea of **creating a back channel** between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin that could have bypassed diplomats and intelligence agencies." [http://reut.rs/2rIxkS6](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b84e04fd2107d448df407ffbf7d83326a230097b7fc462ecc669024ef36db476cb06ee744994111d48b)

**-- KUSHNER'S LAWYER RESPOND:**"'Mr. Kushner participated in thousands of calls in this time period. He has **no recollection of the calls** as described,' Kushner's lawyer Jamie Gorelick [of WilmerHale] told POLITICO in a statement, responding to a Reuters report about Kushner's contacts with Russian ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak. 'We have asked (Reuters) for the dates of such alleged calls so we may look into it and respond, but we have not received such information.'" [http://politi.co/2qtFR6K](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b8404d742edd9101722cc34ea2bd49383fe5b839ff07704b571beb408fb505a9676318138ec7ef5cbe7)

**-- THIS IS GETTING BAD FOR JARED**. And there's no shortage of snickering from haters and detractors inside Trump's White House.

**-- BOB COSTA IN ON THE ACTION: "Senate Intelligence Committee requests Trump campaign documents":**"The Senate Intelligence Committee ... has asked President Trump's political organization to gather and produce all Russia-related documents, emails and phone records going back to his campaign's launch in June 2015, according to two people briefed on the request.

**"The letter from the Senate arrived at Trump's campaign committee**last week and was addressed to the group's treasurer. Since then, some former staffers have been notified and asked to cooperate ... The demand follows a Senate request months earlier for the campaign committee to preserve documents. Dozens of former staffers are expected to be contacted in the coming days to make sure they are aware of what they are required to produce and how to submit those documents." [http://wapo.st/2s1f2sG](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b84a5be2913fbf74f66db6dece149ab8c733aa2665fb6530f2008e52f90d864305433f427a6e1897256)

**-- NYT, TOO: "Russian Once Tied to Trump Aide Seeks Immunity to Cooperate With Congress,"**by Barry Meier and Jesse Drucker: "**Oleg V. Deripaska**, a Russian oligarch once close to President Trump's former campaign manager, has offered to cooperate with congressional committees investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election, but lawmakers are unwilling to accept his conditions, according to congressional officials. Mr. Deripaska's offer comes amid increased attention to his ties to Paul Manafort, who is one of several Trump associates under F.B.I. scrutiny for possible collusion with Russia during the presidential campaign. ... Senate and House panels turned him down because of concerns that immunity agreements create complications for federal criminal investigators." [http://nyti.ms/2rrDA0Q](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=83b8f002fa813b84a749c6f4b5417696966f0a59fd28c59d4a037006b16d5d657cc90fc12816318f9bfcee131b700535)

# Tech Execs Slam Paris Decision, Musk Ditches Trump Council

* BY Chloe Albanesius
* JUNE 1, 2017 06

Elon Musk on Thursday dropped out of President Trump's advisory council after the White House said it will withdraw from the [Paris Climate Agreement](http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php).

"Am **departing presidential councils**. Climate change is real. Leaving Paris is not good for America or the world," Musk [tweeted](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/870369915894546432) this afternoon.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO was a member of Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum, which counts IBM CEO Ginni Rommety and GM CEO Mary Barra among its members. The group was formed in December to advise the president on job creation, and originally included Uber chief Travis Kalanick, too. He [dropped out in February](https://www.pcmag.com/news/351524/uber-ceo-leaves-trumps-advisory-council) to quell rumors that he supports the Trump administration's agenda.

Musk also received pushback for joining the council, particular after Trump signed his travel ban Executive Order. At the time, [Musk asked](https://www.pcmag.com/news/351422/elon-musk-tell-me-how-to-fix-trumps-immigration-order) his 6.9 million Twitter followers to read the order and offer up advice on specific amendments that would make it better, which Musk promised to "present to President."

Musk was apparently not persuasive on that issue, or the climate deal. Yesterday, Musk [tweeted](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/869970236669177856) that he has "done all I can to advise directly to POTUS, through others in WH & via councils, that we remain" in the Paris agreement.

But in a [speech](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/01/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord) at the White House today, Trump announced plans to withdraw from the deal, which he said "is simply the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries.

"The United States will withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord...but begin negotiations to reenter either the Paris Accord or a really entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers. So we're getting out. But we will start to negotiate, and we will **see if we can make a deal that's fair.** And if we can, that's great. And if we can't, that's fine."

Silicon Valley is not convinced. In a [tweet](https://twitter.com/satyanadella/status/870380835144204290), Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said "We believe climate change is an urgent issue that **demands global action**. We remain committed to doing our part."

We believe climate change is an urgent issue that demands global action. We remain committed to doing our part. [https://twitter.com/BradSmi/status/870377765924515840 …](https://t.co/Gfu7P2ESlL)

Brad Smith, **Microsoft** president and chief legal officer, said Redmond "has actively engaged the Trump Administration on the business case for remaining in the Paris Agreement" over the past few months.

"A global framework **strengthens competitiveness for American businesses**. It creates new markets for innovative clean technologies, from green power to smart grids to cloud-enabled solutions," he wrote in a [blog post](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/microsofts-reaction-white-house-announcement-paris-agreement-smith). "And by strengthening global action over time, the Agreement reduces future climate damage to people and organizations around the world."

Microsoft is disappointed in Trump's decision, Smith said, but "we remain steadfastly committed to the sustainability, carbon and energy goals that we have set as a company and to the Paris Agreement's ultimate success."

**Facebook** chief Mark Zuckerberg echoed those sentiments in [a brief post](https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10103765754210171).

"Withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement is **bad for the environment, bad for the economy, and it puts our children's future at risk,**" he wrote. For our part, we've committed that every new data center we build will be powered by 100% renewable energy. Stopping climate change is something we can only do as a global community, and we have to act together before it's too late."

**Apple** chief Tim Cook agreed, [tweeting](https://twitter.com/tim_cook/status/870439008316276736) that the "decision to withdraw from the [#ParisAgreeement](https://twitter.com/hashtag/ParisAgreeement?src=hash) was wrong for our planet. Apple is committed to fight climate change and we will never waver."

**Twitter** CEO Jack Dorsey, meanwhile, [tweeted](https://twitter.com/jack/status/870415162590625792) that "this is an incredibly shortsighted move backwards by the federal government. We're all on this planet together and we need to work together."

**Microsoft—alongside Apple, Adobe, Google, Intel, Salesforce**, and other firms—[placed a full-page ad](https://www.c2es.org/docUploads/dear-mr-president-nyt-05-16-17.pdf) in various newspapers over the past month urging the Trump administration to stay in the deal, which strengthens competitiveness; creates jobs, markets, and growth; and reduces business risks, they said.

"We believe the United States can best exercise global leadership and advance US interests by remaining a full partner in this vital global effort," the ad said.

# What We Learned Today About James Comey, Donald Trump, and the Russia Investigation

*By*[Ben Mathis-Lilley](http://www.slate.com/authors.ben_mathislilley.html)

SLATE

June 8, 2017

Thursday in Washington, James Comey [testified](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/06/08/live_blog_james_comey_testifies_before_the_senate.html), Donald Trump's attorney [reacted to Comey's testimony](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/06/08/trump_personal_lawyer_marc_kasowitz_s_statement.html), and a lot of people said things about both events. Let's review:

* Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the reason he documented his conversations with Donald Trump in such detail was because he suspected Trump would misrepresent them at some later point. Said Comey: "I was honestly concerned he might lie."
* Comey believes that Trump was [directing him to drop the FBI investigation into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/06/08/comey_says_he_believed_trump_was_directing_him_to_drop_flynn_investigation.html) when he told Comey that he "hoped" he would do so. (There are, as you might imagine, [varying opinions as to whether this constitutes obstruction of justice](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/experts-trump-s-comey-firing-possibly-lawful-awful-n770006).)
* Comey said he believes that he "was fired in some way to change ... the way the Russia investigation was being conducted" but expects that special counsel Robert Mueller will carry out the rest of the inquiry "independently, confidently, and honestly."
* After he was fired, Comey gave his notes about the meeting during which the Flynn conversation occurred to a friend who passed them to the *New York Times*. Comey specifically did this, he said, to increase pressure on the Justice Department to name a special counsel to take over the Russia investigation. (It [worked](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/17/us/politics/robert-mueller-special-counsel-russia-investigation.html?_r=0).)
* Donald Trump's personal attorney, Marc Kasowitz, [described](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/06/08/trump_personal_lawyer_marc_kasowitz_s_statement.html) Comey's conveyance of his notes to the Times as an "illegal leak" and "unauthorized disclosure" of "privileged communications with the President." The [initial response from legal experts](https://twitter.com/steve_vladeck/status/872873709501112321) indicates that Kasowitz's use of the concept of "privilege" is misleading and that Comey did not do anything illegal in this circumstance.
* Kasowitz also asserted flatly that Trump never told Comey he hoped the FBI would drop its investigation of Flynn or that he expected "loyalty" from Comey. Both claims contradict Comey's sworn testimony. The White House has still not commented further on Trump's tweeted suggestion that he may have taped his conversations with the ex-FBI director.
* Comey [alluded intriguingly to "facts that I can't discuss in an open setting"](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/06/08/james_comey_indicates_the_fbi_knows_something_about_jeff_sessions_and_russia.html) that led Comey to believe that Attorney General Jeff Sessions could not be an impartial supervisor of the Russia investigation.
* Comey said former Attorney General Loretta Lynch asked him to refer to the Hillary Clinton email server case as [a benign-sounding "matter" rather than an in "investigation."](http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/08/politics/james-comey-loretta-lynch/index.html) This request, and Lynch's infamous tarmac meeting with Bill Clinton, were among the reasons that Comey broke precedent and spoke publicly about the email case despite coming to the conclusion that Clinton should not be prosecuted. (His reasoning was that speaking about the case himself demonstrated that the FBI had made its decision independent of Lynch's influence.)
* Comey nonetheless reiterated that there was "no case" to be made that Clinton should be prosecuted for a crime related to her private email server. "We investigated it very, very thoroughly. I know this is a subject of passionate disagreement, but I knew there was no case there," said Comey.
* Republicans are claiming that, even if Trump's interactions with Comey were inappropriate, it was merely because he was [innocently unaware of the FBI's tradition of independence](https://twitter.com/AP/status/872842643914592256). The GOP is also arguing that Comey's reiteration of his statement that Trump himself was not the subject of a counterintelligence investigation while Comey was FBI director constitutes ["vindication"](http://money.cnn.com/2017/06/08/media/conservative-media-james-comey-hearing/) for Trump. (This is somewhat of a stretch given that Comey has not denied reports that several top Trump advisers, including current White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, are being scrutinized.)

So that's what happened. (What a boring day!) And now we wait for Robert Mueller to, eventually, have his own turn in the spotlight.

# Trump Beat

FiveTirtyEight

June 16, 2017

President Trump’s tax plan turned out to be a [one-page outline](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmxvb21iZXJnLmNvbS9wb2xpdGljcy9hcnRpY2xlcy8yMDE3LTA0LTI2L3RydW1wLXMtdGF4LXBsYW4tcGl0Y2hlcy1yYXRlLWN1dHMtZm9yLWFsbC13aXRoLXNjYW50LWRldGFpbD9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bea0c29c6), and his infrastructure plan [doesn’t yet exist at all](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2FzaGluZ3RvbnBvc3QuY29tL25ld3Mvd29uay93cC8yMDE3LzA2LzA4L3RydW1wLWtlZXBzLXByZXRlbmRpbmctaGlzLWluZnJhc3RydWN0dXJlLXBsYW4taXMtcmVhbC1pdHMtbm90Lz91dG1fdGVybT0uOGNhMDI5MDZlZTNkJmV4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQ/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bdaa5287a). So it was notable this week when the administration’s [plan for reforming banking regulation](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudHJlYXN1cnkuZ292L3ByZXNzLWNlbnRlci9wcmVzcy1yZWxlYXNlcy9Eb2N1bWVudHMvQSUyMEZpbmFuY2lhbCUyMFN5c3RlbS5wZGY_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bb8a876ad) turned out to be a real, substantive document that, as Bloomberg’s Matt Levine [put it](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmxvb21iZXJnLmNvbS92aWV3L2FydGljbGVzLzIwMTctMDYtMTMvYmFuay1yZWd1bGF0b3JzLWFuZC1jeWJlci1uaW5qYXM_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B699cba2e), “generally **seems to have been written by professionals** who are familiar with bank regulation.”

The nearly 150-page Treasury Department plan — the first of several expected reports on financial regulation — laid out the Trump administration’s approach for dealing with what it sees as a [fundamental roadblock](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZWNvbm9taXN0LmNvbS9uZXdzL2ZpbmFuY2UtYW5kLWVjb25vbWljcy8yMTcyMzQwNS1kb2RkLWZyYW5rLWFjdC1nYXZlLXJlZ3VsYXRvcnMtZGlzY3JldGlvbi1kby1tb3JlLWFuZC11bmRlci1kb25hbGQtdHJ1bXA_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B7e6c8129) to its goal of faster economic growth: burdensome rules that discourage banks from lending to people and businesses. Much of the administration’s ire is directed at the [Dodd-Frank Act](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudXNhdG9kYXkuY29tL3N0b3J5L21vbmV5LzIwMTcvMDIvMDMvdGhlLWRvZGRmcmFuay1hY3QtZXhwbGFpbmVkLzk3NDU0NzQ4Lz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B50dc5616), the 2010 law that increased regulation of banks and other institutions in the wake of the financial crisis.

Trump [repeatedly criticized Dodd-Frank](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy53YXNoaW5ndG9uZXhhbWluZXIuY29tL3NldmVuLXRpbWVzLXRydW1wLWhhcy1wbGVkZ2VkLXRvLXJlcGVhbC1kb2RkLWZyYW5rL2FydGljbGUvMjU5MTcxMD9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bd9805614) on the campaign trail last year; once in office, he vowed to “[do a big number](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL21vbmV5LmNubi5jb20vMjAxNy8wMS8zMC9pbnZlc3RpbmcvZG9kZC1mcmFuay10cnVtcC1yZWd1bGF0aW9uLWJhbmtzL2luZGV4Lmh0bWw_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bea209a2b)” on the law, and in February he signed an [executive order](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2hpdGVob3VzZS5nb3YvdGhlLXByZXNzLW9mZmljZS8yMDE3LzAyLzAzL3ByZXNpZGVudGlhbC1leGVjdXRpdmUtb3JkZXItY29yZS1wcmluY2lwbGVzLXJlZ3VsYXRpbmctdW5pdGVkLXN0YXRlcz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B2ebb48c5) calling for a review of its provisions (along with other banking rules). But many of the Treasury Department’s proposals are [comparatively moderate](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmxvb21iZXJnLmNvbS9wb2xpdGljcy9hcnRpY2xlcy8yMDE3LTA2LTEyL3RydW1wLWFkbWluaXN0cmF0aW9uLXRvLWNhbGwtZm9yLW1vZGVzdC1jaGFuZ2VzLXRvLWJhbmtpbmctcnVsZXM_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bd1fcbd63). Many Republicans, for example, want to repeal the “[Volcker rule](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL21vbmV5LmNubi5jb20vMjAxNy8wMS8wOS9pbnZlc3Rpbmcvdm9sY2tlci1ydWxlLXRydW1wLXdhbGwtc3RyZWV0L2luZGV4Lmh0bWw_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B80dabad1),” which bans banks from **placing financial bets with their own money**; the Treasury report, however, proposes only to limit the rule’s scope, not eliminate it entirely. Similarly, the administration wants to limit the power and independence of the **Consumer Financial Protection Bureau** but not shut it down, as [some Republicans have proposed](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3RoZWhpbGwuY29tL3BvbGljeS9maW5hbmNlLzMxOTUxNy1nb3AtYmlsbC13b3VsZC1lbGltaW5hdGUtY29uc3VtZXItZmluYW5jaWFsLXByb3RlY3Rpb24tYnVyZWF1P2V4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQ/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B6d4f1e86). Most of the Treasury report is dedicated to relatively esoteric proposals that, though significant (and controversial), are unlikely to reshape the financial system in a fundamental way. (The House earlier this month [passed a more sweeping rollback](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL21vbmV5LmNubi5jb20vMjAxNy8wNi8xMi9pbnZlc3RpbmcvZG9kZC1mcmFuay1iYWlsb3V0cy1maW5hbmNpYWwtY2hvaWNlLWFjdC1vbGEvaW5kZXguaHRtbD9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bb5495c64) of the Dodd-Frank rules, but the bill is unlikely to win Senate approval.)

It isn’t clear, however, that the core problem that the Treasury’s plan sets out to solve actually exists. Dodd-Frank is a complex, unwieldy law that almost no one loves — even former Congressman Barney Frank, one of the bill’s authors, has said [parts of the law need fixing](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5jbmJjLmNvbS8yMDE3LzAyLzA2L2Jhcm5leS1mcmFuay1kb2RkLWZyYW5rLW5lZWRzLXJlZm9ybXMtdW5kZXItdHJ1bXAtd2hpdGUtaG91c2UuaHRtbD9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B79e54c4f). But it’s less clear that the law has significantly constrained lending, or that those constraints are, in turn, holding back the economy. Total commercial and industrial lending is at an all-time high, according to [data from the Federal Reserve](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZmVkZXJhbHJlc2VydmUuZ292L3JlbGVhc2VzL2g4L2N1cnJlbnQvZGVmYXVsdC5odG0_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bce42a28d), and household debt recently [surpassed pre-financial-crisis levels](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud3NqLmNvbS9hcnRpY2xlcy91LXMtaG91c2Vob2xkLWRlYnRzLWhpdC1yZWNvcmQtaGlnaC1pbi1maXJzdC1xdWFydGVyLTE0OTUwMzMyMDY_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B1c017c70) (though households [owe less as a share of their income](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud3NqLmNvbS9hcnRpY2xlcy90aGUtbXl0aC1vZi10aGUtaW5kZWJ0ZWQtYW1lcmljYW4tMTQ5Njk1MjgyMz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B6cdf3237) than they did before the downturn). Some types of loans, notably mortgages, are definitely harder to get than they were before the financial crisis, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing; **irresponsible lending**, after all, [played a key role](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5lY29ub21pc3QuY29tL25ld3Mvc2Nob29sc2JyaWVmLzIxNTg0NTM0LWVmZmVjdHMtZmluYW5jaWFsLWNyaXNpcy1hcmUtc3RpbGwtYmVpbmctZmVsdC1maXZlLXllYXJzLWFydGljbGU_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bcfedb5fb) in the economic collapse. Beyond those specific areas, however, the problem facing the global economy in recent years has been a **lack of demand** for credit, not a lack of supply. That doesn’t mean Dodd-Frank shouldn’t be fixed, but it does suggest that those changes are unlikely to deliver the economic rewards Trump is hoping for.

**Health care: Looking back to look ahead**

Senate GOP efforts to write a bill to repeal and replace parts of the Affordable Care Act are [shrouded in secrecy](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuc3RhdG5ld3MuY29tLzIwMTcvMDYvMTQvaGVhbHRoLWNhcmUtdHJhbnNwYXJlbmN5Lz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B14d1ae14) (even [some Republicans say they haven’t seen the bill](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly90d2l0dGVyLmNvbS9zYWhpbGthcHVyL3N0YXR1cy84NzUzOTM5NjAzMDIzMjU3NjA_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B1aee0fec)). So while waiting for more details to come to light, health policy organizations and foundations have been working to understand the House version of the bill, which is reportedly serving as the basis for the Senate package. That’s easier said than done: Though [relatively short by legislative standards](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly9maXZldGhpcnR5ZWlnaHQuY29tL2ZlYXR1cmVzL3RydW1wYmVhdC1ob3ctdG8tanVkZ2UtdHJ1bXAvP2V4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQjaGVhbHRoLWNhcmU/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B9aa2e93a) (largely because it is functionally an add-on to the ACA), the House bill involves a lot of moving parts. The effects of some pieces are relatively straightforward, like [the rollbacks to Medicaid](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5tb2Rlcm5oZWFsdGhjYXJlLmNvbS9hcnRpY2xlLzIwMTcwNTA0L05FV1MvMTcwNTA5OTIzP2V4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQ/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bfdd9be72), but others, such as [a series of waivers](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL2hlYWx0aGFmZmFpcnMub3JnL2Jsb2cvMjAxNy8wNC8yNS90aGUtbWFjYXJ0aHVyLWFtZW5kbWVudC1sYW5ndWFnZS1yYWNlLWluLXRoZS1mZWRlcmFsLWV4Y2hhbmdlLWFuZC1yaXNrLWFkanVzdG1lbnQtY29lZmZpY2llbnRzLz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bc8fa14c4) that states could adopt to loosen insurance regulations, are not. And one criticism of the Republican efforts has been that they [are moving too fast](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5wb2xpdGljby5jb20vc3RvcnkvMjAxNy8wMy90b20tY290dG9uLW9iYW1hY2FyZS1yZXBlYWwtc2xvdy1kb3duLTIzNTgxNz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B4b312a3c) to fully explore how they might change the health care landscape.

That change could be substantial. Take those waivers, for example: Under the Affordable Care Act, insurers must cover a broad range of services. Through one of the waivers, the House bill would let **states opt out** of those requirements in certain circumstances, and the [Congressional Budget Office estimates](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuY2JvLmdvdi9wdWJsaWNhdGlvbi81Mjc1Mj9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bd658859e) that up to half of the population lives in states that would do so. One big question, then, is which specific services insurers in those states would choose to cover. Although we don’t have a crystal ball to tell us, we can look backward for clues.

An analysis released by the Kaiser Family Foundation this week examined [what kinds of services were covered](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5rZmYub3JnL2hlYWx0aC1yZWZvcm0vaXNzdWUtYnJpZWYvd291bGQtc3RhdGVzLWVsaW1pbmF0ZS1rZXktYmVuZWZpdHMtaWYtYWhjYS13YWl2ZXJzLWFyZS1lbmFjdGVkLz9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bdc5d01b4) before Obamacare. Most insurers were willing to cover generic prescription drugs, the analysis found, while only 25 percent of individual plans covered **maternity care**. Treatment for substance abuse and mental health care was more split, with 55 percent of plans covering substance abuse treatment and 62 percent covering **mental health services**. Those are troubling numbers in a time when the U.S. is experiencing [an unprecedented number of drug overdose-related deaths](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudGhlZ3VhcmRpYW4uY29tL3NvY2lldHkvbmctaW50ZXJhY3RpdmUvMjAxNi9tYXkvMjUvb3Bpb2lkLWVwaWRlbWljLW92ZXJkb3NlLWRlYXRocy1tYXA_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B46921e13). Sure, it would be unpopular to remove those benefits, but history shows us that without regulations in place, insurers just might.

**Immigration: See you in court**

Trump’s efforts to temporarily ban travel from six predominantly Muslim countries experienced another setback in the courts this week as [a second federal appeals court](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAxNy8wNi8xMi91cy9wb2xpdGljcy90cnVtcC10cmF2ZWwtYmFuLWNvdXJ0LW9mLWFwcGVhbHMuaHRtbD9lbWM9ZWRpdF9ubl8yMDE3MDYxMyZubD1tb3JuaW5nLWJyaWVmaW5nJm5saWQ9NzI3MjM4MDEmdGU9MSZleF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B3d0c1424) upheld a block of a revised version of his executive order. After two appeals courts have refused to reinstate provisions of the order, the Supreme Court will decide whether the ban can take effect.

The two appeals courts reached the same conclusion — **Trump’s ban is illegal** — but they followed somewhat different reasoning to get there. In the latest decision, from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a three-judge panel unanimously [found](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL2Nkbi5jYTkudXNjb3VydHMuZ292L2RhdGFzdG9yZS9vcGluaW9ucy8yMDE3LzA2LzEyLzE3LTE1NTg5LnBkZj9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bee4dd10d) that the president didn’t adequately explain why barring entry from the countries was detrimental to interests of the U.S. In a separate decision last month, a majority from the [4th Circuit Court of Appeals](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubnl0aW1lcy5jb20vMjAxNy8wNS8yNS91cy9wb2xpdGljcy90cnVtcC10cmF2ZWwtYmFuLWJsb2NrZWQuaHRtbD9leF9jaWQ9dHJ1bXBiZWF0/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B011a6936) found the revised travel order violated the First Amendment’s prohibition on religious discrimination. The court based its decision in part on comments that Trump made during the campaign; Chief Judge Roger Gregory [wrote](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL2Nvb3AuY2E0LnVzY291cnRzLmdvdi8xNzEzNTEuUC5wZGY_ZXhfY2lkPXRydW1wYmVhdA/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B0d4ae7b9) that they revealed Trump’s intent to ban Muslims from the U.S. But even after a court loss that resulted from his own words, Trump [hasn’t stopped tweeting](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5jbm4uY29tLzIwMTcvMDYvMDUvcG9saXRpY3MvdHJ1bXAtdHdlZXQtdHJhdmVsLWJhbi9pbmRleC5odG1sP2V4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQ/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9Bbacd5532) that the travel limitations are needed.

The lengthy court battle has introduced another wrinkle to the case: The [original justification for the travel ban](http://link.fivethirtyeight.com/click/9863967.61119/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2hpdGVob3VzZS5nb3YvdGhlLXByZXNzLW9mZmljZS8yMDE3LzAzLzA2L2V4ZWN1dGl2ZS1vcmRlci1wcm90ZWN0aW5nLW5hdGlvbi1mb3JlaWduLXRlcnJvcmlzdC1lbnRyeS11bml0ZWQtc3RhdGVzP2V4X2NpZD10cnVtcGJlYXQ/57fe1970289acbb6768b52b9B7d81f5bb) was that the administration needed time to study vetting procedures for visitors from the six countries. But, critics say, after all the back and forth with the courts, the administration will have had plenty of time to conduct its study. They argue, in effect, that courts shouldn’t bother ruling on the temporary suspension at all and should wait to consider whatever new vetting rules the administration comes up with. The proposed ban is only temporary, said Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the national Immigrants’ Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union. “Before deciding whether to hear these issues, the Supreme Court should wait to see if the government issues a permanent ban after the review period is done,” Gelernt said.

# June 24, 2017 Report From Politico

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| POLITICO Playbook |
| 06/24/2017   |  | | --- | |  |   By ANNA PALMER , JAKE SHERMAN and DANIEL LIPPMAN  **BAD NEWS FOR TRUMP -- Five Senate Republicans oppose** the GOP health care bill. Sens. **Dean Heller** (Nev.), **Ron Johnson** (Wis.), **Mike Lee** (Utah), **Ted Cruz** (Texas) and **Rand Paul** (Ky.) have all come out against the package. It matters precious little at this point who else is against the bill because the math here is pretty simple. With Democrats uniformly opposed to the legislation, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell can only lose two votes. While Trump has started personally lobbying GOP senators, his ability to turn votes in the chamber is uncertain and untested. Still, no one should ever count McConnell out -- he's among the savviest leaders Capitol Hill has seen.  **WHAT AMERICA IS SEEING THIS MORNING**  **-- SAN DIEGO UNION TRIBUNE:**"HEALTH BILL LOBBYING HEATS UP: Key GOP senator balks at current version; Trump, Democrats scramble to shore up allies before vote" [http://bit.ly/2t6o0bU](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c874066ed7698b414fc20c1f48990fa2952ab26976409b56ea2eb8aaf2800815e87c65b8f0b0d6c94ab62eb5067b4b17fa) ...**DENVER POST:**"Fifth GOP senator opposes latest health bill: Nevada's Heller worried by Medicaid cuts; Republican super PAC to attack him in ads" [http://bit.ly/2tFmhHp](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c82785b75e530530652166c379bd8d02d112ffe72e8ddfd9c4df2d6fa0fdcf51631583687fa2efdb44b983b8226800d6ac) ...  **... HARTFORD COURANT:**"Senators Expect 'Titanic' Fight: Blumenthal, Murphy Blast 'Evil' Bill, GOP Secrecy" [http://bit.ly/2u0cRpj](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c875c3f4a3eee4ce2391bcf4c93b9965861a7b770bf512669995e5446402363186a4e99fff675bfda3f6cae56bd1ff8029) ... **JANESVILLE GAZETTE:**"Medicaid faces hard times: Historic change possible with GOP health plans" [http://bit.ly/2sBNHzm](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c852d60a99df48451c63db51f70c139ad50683cd19ca2eadfb6b33c987ed954228a134ce960fcc796e23e3f18eac193ca5)  **STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT, FROM THE WHITE HOUSE -- @realdonaldtrump at8:51 a.m.:**"Democrats slam GOP healthcare proposal as Obamacare premiums & deductibles increase by over 100%. Remember keep your doctor, keep your plan?"  **-- GUESS WHAT:**Democrats were never going to vote to repeal Obamacare. The stalemate on health care is a GOP issue. If you talk to elected Republicans on the Hill, they pretty much all understand that they now own health care as a political issue.  **THE HEADACHE MCCONNELL DOESN'T NEED -- "The surprising GOP holdout on the Senate's health bill,"**by Jen Haberkorn: "Ron Johnson stormed Washington in 2010 by railing against Obamacare, becoming one of the law's harshest and most persistent critics. Now, with the Senate on the brink of repealing the law, he's one of the surprise holdouts threatening to block the bill. The Wisconsin Republican says Senate leaders are rushing the vote before he and the public can analyze it and are not doing enough to actually bring down premiums. He joined with a trio of Senate conservatives on Thursday who say they're open to negotiation but can't support Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's bill as it is." [http://politi.co/2u0cOdd](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8fad528e7e23e78d2f442d03892c0d53c96be0e9375696f508b83455c520eb59f9ffc2831770634c6eac152f34ce58afa)  **-- FROM WAPO'S SEAN SULLIVAN, BOB COSTA AND KELSEY SNELL:**"As the vote-counting effort intensifies, Trump, who has said he supports the bill but it needs more 'negotiation,' is trying to build consensus both in public and behind the scenes. On Thursday, he called Sen. Ted Cruz (Tex.), one of the five GOP holdouts, to speak with him about his proposed changes, according to White House officials and a Trump ally with knowledge of the conversation."[http://wapo.st/2sMHSh6](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c80f4a8decfbad22816791fc471f3f2754869ed45fb73a7a5a27c1958c5432f803b6f5a1341a644fc79f7ac0e43d773bf1)  **AIR WARS -- "Pro-Trump group to target GOP Sen. Heller over health care bill,"**by Matt Nussbaum and Alex Isenstadt: "A pro-Trump outside group is launching an advertising blitz against Republican Sen. Dean Heller over his opposition to the health care repeal bill - a bold act of political retaliation against a member of the president's own party. Heller, a Nevada Republican, is up for re-election in 2018 and is seen as one of the most vulnerable incumbents up for reelection this cycle. The barrage, which will be orchestrated by America First Policies, a group run by many of President Donald Trump's top campaign advisers, is backed by more than a million dollars ... Digital ads [were] set to begin running on Friday, and television and radio spots are set to launch early next week." [http://politi.co/2t6bZDi](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8b758c2d2812767e1621cee4721c5180f26ccd91a3a26bdb3e027dbdcb4e4335dad1fcba22b5de3012daf5961b3bf66f4)  **-- THIS IS STUNNING.**Heller is perhaps the most embattled Senate Republican in 2018. A group that VP Mike Pence raised money for is going after him. This is the kind of thing that is going to have Senate Republicans wondering if the White House and its allies have any idea what they're doing.  **WHAT REX TILLERSON'S BEEN UP TO -- "Overruling diplomats, U.S. to drop Iraq, Myanmar from child soldiers' list,"**by Reuters' Jason Szep and Matt Spetalnick: "In a highly unusual intervention, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson plans to remove Iraq and Myanmar from a U.S. list of the world's worst offenders in the use of child soldiers, disregarding the recommendations of State Department experts and senior U.S. diplomats, U.S. officials said. The decision, confirmed by three U.S. officials, would break with longstanding protocol at the State Department over how to identify offending countries and could prompt accusations the Trump administration is prioritizing security and diplomatic interests ahead of human rights.  **"Tillerson overruled his own staff's assessments**on the use of child soldiers in both countries and rejected the recommendation of senior diplomats in Asia and the Middle East who wanted to keep Iraq and Myanmar on the list, said the officials, who have knowledge of the internal deliberations. Tillerson also rejected an internal State Department proposal to add Afghanistan to the list, the three U.S. officials said." [http://reut.rs/2rNvrAa](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8c4678b9dc20a3d4503206390506f53114eb5935148506bdcf27483415fe75d34de6edbd132743e884d332c7074cf7b19)  **BONUS FOGGY BOTTOM REPORT -- "Intelligence officials worry State Dept. going easy on Russian diplomats,"** by Ali Watkins: "Intelligence officials and lawmakers are concerned that the State Department is dragging its feet in implementing a crackdown on Russian diplomats' travel within the U.S., despite evidence that Moscow is using lax restrictions to conduct intelligence operations.The frustration comes amid bipartisan concern that the Trump administration is trying to slow down other congressional efforts to get tough on Russia. ... The Kremlin's U.S.-based diplomatic corps, according to several U.S. intelligence sources, has been known to skip notification rules and use the lax restrictions to roam around the country, likely engaging in surveillance activities." [http://politi.co/2tZI8cb](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c84c3629e4d269ede6fff0aeee9b8ec233f8b870d26d5f00a1989e95dad6ff25deea8e9e21d62a6d6e5d4600e7f3dc1cdd)  **-- "State's Afghanistan-Pakistan envoy leaves, spurring confusion about U.S. diplomacy in region,"**by Nahal Toosi: "The State Department unit that deals with Afghanistan and Pakistan has lost its top official and its fate is uncertain, even as President Donald Trump weighs increasing U.S. military presence in the region. The development has spawned confusion inside and outside the State Department about the future of the section known as the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, or SRAP." [http://politi.co/2t5NmWF](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8eaa4e9e5290e4922fdee28c713abf9b0b0db01189378119d2f232e0ccbe4b8738dc7a60400c9bda8835576be7574587d)  **KOCH WATCH -- "Vice President Pence meets with billionaire Charles Koch,"**by USA Today's Fredreka Schouten in Colorado Springs: "Pence, who has longstanding ties to Koch's political and policy empire, met with the Kansas industrialist for about 50 minutes ... Friday's meeting included Marc Short, Trump's director of legislative affairs, and longtime Pence aide Marty Obst. Short is a former top official in the Koch network. Those accompanying Charles Koch included key Koch lieutenants Mark Holden and Brian Hooks, who oversee the network's activities, along with Tim Phillips, who runs the Kochs' grassroots arm, Americans for Prosperity. [James] Davis also attended." [https://usat.ly/2sMROXU](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8ca6268fb1eca269c5a7025378cc5d2b7fff2256c74ab3f89d89e890aab2c1c0f30f7309ee3a8093b4b86dbc62f4d3880)  **COMING ATTRACTIONS -- "The other treaty on the chopping block,"**by Gregory Hellman and Bryan Bender: "A fierce debate is brewing inside the Trump administration over whether to withdraw from another international treaty - this one a cornerstone **disarmament pact** with Russia banning an entire class of nuclear missiles. ... Leading Republican hawks are pushing legislation to compel Trump to take steps to develop new missiles in response - the first steps to jettisoning what is known as the INF treaty, signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mihkail Gorbachev. ... But there are serious questions inside the Pentagon, State Department and the White House National Security Council - and loud warnings from the architects of the pact - about the consequences of such a move, which some say could spark a full-blown arms race." [http://politi.co/2t6mWET](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8f02191d22312dadffeeff6628351469f682ece4ba74a0f1516d414e7a3a9c8d6b33b82a8b609eaf5ac220b72c57ee9c7)   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | |  | **PLAYBOOK READS** |  | |   **DEPT. OF PREVIOUS LIVES -- N.Y. DAILY NEWS -- "Trump commerce secretary once flouted zoning laws and built a wall around his Southampton property,"**by James Fanelli: "President Trump isn't the only one in his administration who thinks a border wall can solve a problem. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross once built an illegal wall on the perimeter of his swanky Southampton estate to block the noise from the American Indian reservation across the street and the traffic along Montauk Highway. When the billionaire cabinet member was told he couldn't have the wall, he waged a three-year legal battle with the local zoning board of appeals that he ultimately lost. Ross installed the sound barrier after his infant grandson kept waking up from the procession of cars and trucks along the highway and from the parade of customers at the tax-free tobacco shops on Shinnecock Nation land." [http://nydn.us/2s7v8Qg](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c82ce7f287d8f8b8f57ac35f9b0ee337ce19b9d5105b1b84c830114081c5b27fb34ac8aaea72ffea6dfc788b594035b3b6)  **THE BLURRING -- "The White House hires a Trump hotel executive to serve as chief usher,"**by WaPo's Krissah Thompson and Jonathan O'Connell: "Melania Trump on Friday named a senior manager at Washington's Trump International Hotel to serve as chief usher of the White House. Timothy Harleth, who worked for Mandarin Oriental hotels in D.C. and New York before joining one of the Trumps' flagship hotels last year, will take the crucial position overseeing the staff of housekeepers, butlers and others who work in the first family's living quarters and maintain the executive mansion. ... This spring, the Trumps pushed out Chief Usher Angella Reid, an Obama appointee who had also come from the world of luxury hotels. The White House gave no reason for her firing other than a desire for change." [http://wapo.st/2rN5NM2](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c84e38fe02045d1c5a104a4e2feeb795707302df15b0b1bcfe744ed444eaa6544aaeab3a48fc8fd6a648c33e1c3de0d923)  **KNOWING CORRY BLISS -- "The GOP's one-man fire brigade:**After four special election wins, Republicans are relying on the Congressional Leadership Fund's Corry Bliss to safeguard the House majority," by Eliana Johnson: "Bliss has proselytized relentlessly about the declining importance of television, which Trump used to great effect, and the rising importance of ground game, something Barack Obama and Democrats were quicker to exploit than their Republican counterparts. He was bitterly critical of what he regarded as the [RNC's] weak field program last year in Ohio, where he built an independent field operation on Portman's behalf - a move that ruffled feathers at the [RNC].  **"The senator waltzed to victory,** but Bliss clashed repeatedly with then-RNC chairman Reince Priebus and his chief of staff, Katie Walsh, over Portman's field program; and Priebus and Walsh later waved off Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan from hiring Bliss to run the [NRSC] and the [NRCC]. Sources close to Bliss and Priebus say they have a cordial relationship now." [http://politi.co/2t637gZ](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8cf0c00c51aa134ac9844b182a56ab4e4e8283a6c59b8e521a30da158ea87a3948592ec4bf9d5d8fd26e84ae3e1dc2355)  **FIRST PERSON - DAVID RANK in WaPo, "Why I resigned from the Foreign Service after 27 years":**"When the administration decided to withdraw from the Paris agreement on climate change, however, I concluded that, as a parent, patriot and Christian, I could not in good conscience be involved in any way, no matter how small, with the implementation of that decision. ... I worry about the frequently politically motivated portrayal of those who work for the American people as members of some mythical elite, separate and suspicious. Such false characterizations drive talented Americans away from public service or discourage them from entering it in the first place." [http://wapo.st/2t5Wif5](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=97392f727522f7c8627c34972f10b26fa8bfeff8dfa5e60083eae61d440ae29cb7ecad4d8d1e4cca3d0e6b5c452505bcba8ade6168d1bdc5) |

# Rolling back Obama’s rules

**President Trump taps a seldom-used law to overturn 14 regulations**

Los Angeles Times

3 Jul 2017

By Lauren Rosenblatt

PRESIDENT TRUMP and Congress have used a 1996 law to kill regulations passed in the final months of President Obama’s term with a **simple majority vote**.

From the start of his presidency, Donald Trump has championed less government regulation, taking pride in killing numerous rules adopted by his predecessor.

Using a seldom-utilized 1996 law, Trump and the GOP-led Congress overturned **14 Obama-era regulations** in a number of areas, including the environment and guns.

The Congressional Review Act expedites the process to overturn rules adopted by a previous administration.

If used during the first 60 days of a new legislative session, it allows Congress to kill regulations passed in the final months of a previous administration — after June 2016 in this case — with a simple majority vote, avoiding the usual 60 votes needed to avoid a Senate filibuster.

The law had only been used successfully once before the 115th Congress took full advantage of its power.

Here’s what the repeal of these regulations will mean:

1. **Companies no longer have to disclose payments made to foreign governments involving oil, gas or minerals**

• Passed: July 27 • Repealed: Feb. 14

This regulation required companies to annually **disclose any payments made to foreign governments** related to the commercial use of oil, natural gas or minerals, specifically the type and total amount of each payment to a certain project or government.

The rule was designed to ensure the American people knew where these companies were drilling and who they were paying. Supporters said it was important for transparency and national security.

Opponents said it was unnecessarily bureaucratic, decreased efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, and sacrificed American jobs.

2. **Mining companies have fewer regulations on waste management**

• Passed: Dec. 20 • Repealed: Feb. 16

The stream protection rule placed restrictions and offered new guidelines on where and how mining companies can dump waste. The rule required companies to record how their mining processes changed the ecosystem and to develop a plan for later restoring those ecosystems.

Supporters said it would **protect waterways, forests and wildlife**, potentially contribute to reducing climate change, improve public health and encourage companies to use more innovative technology. Opponents argue that these benefits come at the expense of jobs, shrink the list of potential mining sites and reduce profits.

3. **People with mental disabilities can more easily purchase a gun**

• Passed: Dec. 19 • Repealed: Feb. 28

This rule, in response to the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, made it more difficult for mentally ill people to purchase a gun by requiring the Social Security Administration to report disability recipients with a severe mental illness to the FBI’s criminal background check system.

Those who supported the rule said it could reduce the number of mass shootings by people with a severe mental illness. But those who opposed it say it limits the 2nd Amendment right to purchase a gun and has too broad a definition for mental illness.

Mental health advocacy groups argued that it stigmatized people with a mental illness.

4. **Federal contractors no longer have to disclose every labor law violation**

• Passed: Aug. 25 • Repealed: March 27

The Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces rule required contractors applying for federal money to disclose any violations of labor laws, including those related to civil rights, family and medical leave, fair wages, and health and safety standards.

Supporters of the rule said it increased efficiency and productivity in federally funded companies and prevented taxpayer dollars from going to companies that had violated labor laws.

Opponents said it cast too wide a net and would harm contractors who had documented only small violations or got caught in the confusion of filing the correct paperwork. They worried the rule would unfairly place businesses on a “black list” for federal contracts.

5. **The government will revert back to 34-year old rules for determining land use**

• Passed: Dec. 12 • Repealed: March 27

The revised version of 34-year-old rules changed how the Bureau of Land Management decided how land would be used.

Supporters of the updated rules said they increased public involvement in the decision-making process, improved efficiency and government transparency, and allowed the bureau to more quickly and effectively address issues surrounding land and resource use. Opponents said they reduced the power of state and local governments, which they said often knew more about the land and how to effectively manage it, and prioritized national objectives.

Because the regulations were repealed through the Congressional Review Act, many are concerned that the outdated guidelines won’t be updated anytime soon. The law prevents government agencies from issuing a similar rule to the one Congress has overturned.

6. **School districts have more say in how to define success**

• Passed: Nov. 29 • Repealed: March 27

These guidelines outlined specific procedures for school districts to follow in order to meet the requirements of Obama’s Every Student Succeeds Act, such as what to include on a report card, how to define “consistently underperforming” students and how to develop a timeline for interventions.

Supporters of the guidelines say they helped schools track and monitor their progress while also holding them accountable for educational success and equity.

But opponents say the regulations went against the fundamental principle of the act, which was designed to allow states to decide how to define the success of their schools.

7. **States choose how to evaluate teacher preparation training programs**

• Passed: Oct. 31 • Repealed: March 27

The Department of Education issued new guidelines for how to determine the quality of teacher preparation training programs. The guidelines required an annual report of several different characteristics of the program, including an assessment of teachers’ performance.

Without such guidelines, supporters worry programs won’t be held accountable or be able to receive the help they need. Opponents argue the federal government should allow states to determine how to evaluate these programs on their own.

8. **States can now conduct drug tests of any applicant for unemployment compensation**

• Passed: Aug.1 • Repealed: March 31

This Department of Labor rule clarified what industries and companies could regularly conduct drug tests for unemployment applicants. This is based on regulations that states can only drug test applicants who were previously fired because of substance abuse or only suitable to work in a field that consistently tests.

Opponents of the rule say the definition was too narrow and left states vulnerable to spending valuable unemployment compensation dollars on funding former employees’ drug habits.

However, supporters say without the law states would spend too much money on unnecessary drug tests. They also say it protected applicants who were unemployed for reasons other than drug abuse.

9. **Hunters in Alaska have fewer restrictions for killing predators in national wildlife refuges**

• Passed: Aug. 5 • Repealed: April 3

This rule amended regulations for predator control and outlawed some hunting methods in national wildlife refuges in Alaska.

Supporters say the new regulations protected predator species, defining “predator control as the intention to reduce the population of predators for the benefit of prey species” and outlawing some hunting and trapping methods.

The prohibition included taking some bear cubs or sows with cubs, trapping bears in snares or using bait and killing wolves and coyotes in denning season.

Opponents say the rules are counterproductive to the goal of the refuges, which work to keep the balance between predator and prey species. Many say the rules violated Alaska’s right to manage its own fish and game and put the state government in an inferior position to the federal government.

10. **Companies no longer have to maintain five year record of workplace injuries**

• Passed: Dec. 19 • Repealed: April 3

This regulation clarified that employers must maintain proper records of any workplace injury or illness for five years and could be cited for any violations during that time period. The clarification was in response to some interpretations that employers could be fined only if the violation was caught within six months.

Supporters worry the six-month time frame allows employers to brush aside injuries and does not give enough time to identify and correct problems.

Opponents of the regulation say the five-year time period put extra burdens on companies while doing little to protect worker safety.

11. **Broadband providers no longer need permission for data collection**

• Passed: Dec. 2 • Repealed: April 3

This regulation, meant to protect consumers, required broadband companies such as Verizon, Comcast and AT&T to get permission from customers before tracking and collecting their online and app activity.

Supporters say customers should be able to monitor how much personal information the companies are able to see because broadband providers have more access to their data than any other Internet service.

Opponents argue the rule placed unfair, costly restrictions on broadband providers that other companies with access to online content, such as Facebook and Google, did not have to comply with.

12. **States can opt to withhold federal family planning money from certain healthcare providers**

• Passed: Dec. 19 • Repealed: April 13

This regulation clarified that states could not withhold federal funds from healthcare providers for any reason other than their ability to carry out family planning services. Part of a larger bill regulating how federal grants are distributed to family planning services, the regulation amended how states make decisions about how to use the federal money.

Without this amendment in place, organizations that offer abortions, particularly Planned Parenthood and its affiliates, are at risk for losing funding. Supporters worry that overturning the rule will leave families, particularly people who belong to racial minority groups or fall below the poverty line, without services such as birth control, cancer screening and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

Although federal money cannot be used for abortions, opponents say companies that offer abortions or their affiliates should not benefit from federal services. They say the overturn is a victory for abortion rights foes and state governments.

13. and 14. **State and local governments have fewer guidelines for establishing retirement plans**

State governments • Passed: Aug. 30 • Repealed: May 17

Local governments • Passed: Dec. 20 • Repealed: April 13 To help protect workers who do not have access to retirement plans through an employer, these regulations required state and local governments to offer IRA-based plans. But they specified that these plans would not fall under the supervision of the Employee Retirement Security Act.

Supporters said the rule encouraged workers to maintain self-funded retirement plans, making them less dependent on Social Security benefits.

Opponents said the rule would make **employees more vulnerable** with less information about how their retirement plans were managed.

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# Trump: We’ll let Obamacare fail

By Stephen Collinson, CNN

July 18, 2017

**Washington (CNN)**The [collapse of the Republican bid to repeal and replace Obamacare](http://www.cnn.com/2017/07/18/politics/how-the-republican-health-care-bill-fell-apart/index.html) Monday, alongside chaos brewed by the Russia scandal, has revealed a stunted presidency and a White House struggling to master the levers of power.

It also leaves President Donald Trump **without a significant legislative triumph** to show for his first six months in office.

"He was playing with a firetruck and trying on a cowboy hat as the bill was collapsing and he had no clue," a top Republican told CNN's Jeff Zeleny on Tuesday, mocking the "Made In America" week at the White House.

Trump was prepared to shoulder no blame for the failure of the bill on Tuesday, and warned he would now simply let Obamacare fail.

"We're not going to own it. I'm not going to own it. I can tell you the Republicans are not going to own it. We'll let Obamacare fail and then the Democrats are going to come to us," Trump told reporters at the White House.

So far however, there is no sign that the Democrats would take part in any effort that would effectively repeal Obamacare. And it seems just as likely that a crisis in the health care industry, involving Americans losing health insurance, would come back to hurt the party in power, in Congress and the White House -- Republicans.

Combined with Trump's **historically low approval rating** for a President at this stage of his first term, and the constant, corrosive presence of the Russia drama, it adds up to a presidency testing the limits of political viability.

"When a President has the lowest approval ratings of any President after six months it's not surprising he took one of the biggest body blows in politics after six months," said David Gergen, a senior CNN political analyst.

"We have never seen a President put forward a major legislative piece in his early days that was greeted with such derision and such fear," Gergen told CNN's Don Lemon on Monday night.

The question now is whether the White House and Republicans in Congress can find a way to marshall the GOP monopoly on power towards another significant agenda item -- tax reform for instance.

If Trump is to be more successful in future legislative fights, it may require big changes in his style.

Perhaps the ultimate takeaway from this legislative disaster is that Trump's own political methodology -- that was wildly successful in getting him elected, has turned out to be an insufficient base on which to build a functioning presidency.

The health care effort revealed a White House that was **unskilled** in dealing with Congress and in some cases **unaware** to the political pressures faced by Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill. When the bill was speeding towards extinction on Monday, Trump was apparently oblivious to the impending embarrassment.

On Monday afternoon, he blithely asserted that all was well, apparently unaware that the bill was already all but doomed.

"We're getting it together and it's going to happen," he said during his afternoon event on US manufacturing, where he spent time admiring products including jumping into a fire truck and donning a Stetson hat.

He also spent hours this weekend -- when the bill's chances of passing were expiring -- at the US Women's Golf Open, at his Bedminister, New Jersey, course, waving to fans and watching the action.

That behavior was in keeping with the hands off attitude that Trump adopted during the Senate's Obamacare repeal efforts. But it also raises questions about his political approach itself.

In recent days, Trump adopted big brush themes, maintained his **superficial acquaintance with policy**, used of social media as a messaging tool, and refused to accept any of the conventions about how politics has been conducted for eons -- i.e. how bills have been passed.

He promised vengeance if Republicans did not pass the bill -- but little incentive for doubtful senators to get behind him, perhaps not the most effective strategy for a President with low approval ratings.

"I don't even want to talk about it because I think it would be very bad," Trump said in an interview last week with Christian Broadcasting Network. "I will be very angry about it and a lot of people will be very upset.

And yet, a pair of conservative senators, Mike Lee of Utah and Jerry Moran of Kansas, broke the news of their opposition -- sinking the bill -- while Trump was dining with other GOP senators to discuss the legislation.

"It was beyond rude," a Republican senator who asked to speak without attribution to talk candidly about the feeling inside the caucus told CNN's Dana Bash of Lee and Moran's move.

Yet this senator also noted how illustrative it is about the level of respect for this President among many Republicans on the hill.

"It just shows what our guys think of Trump. Can you imagine them doing this to another president?" the senator said.

Trump's reaction to defeat

The President's public comments before and after the humiliating defeat was typical of his engagement during the process, showing an **incomplete understanding** of the political dynamics, a tendency to apportion blame to others and a lack of specifics about how the legislation could be saved or improved beyond unspecific platitudes.

Then, after disaster struck, he tweeted, calling for a simple vote to repeal Obamacare -- and work on a replacement plan from a clean slate.

But it's unclear whether that is a workable legislative solution in the Senate, or a political one for the GOP since it would be easy to opponents to frame the bill as slashing health care for millions of people without offering them any immediate replacement.

By Tuesday, Trump was lashing out his political foes.

"We were let down by all of the Democrats and a few Republicans. Most Republicans were loyal, terrific & worked really hard. We will return!" Trump tweeted on Tuesday morning.

But a rebound will depend on getting a significant piece of legislation passed -- to show this White House and this Congress can get it done despite the obstacles that thwarted the health care push.

The immediate impact of the Obamacare repeal failure will be to further overshadow the victories Trump has secured.

He managed to install a new Supreme Court justice, Neil Gorsuch, who was widely praised by conservatives and will carry forward his legacy for decades to come.

The liberation of the Iraqi city of Mosul, with US help, and the recent strides against ISIS in Syria, have not got the attention they might deserve, and the White House can post to some decent economic data -- though Democrats would say both those trends were set in place by the Obama White House.

Quietly, the administration has also been working to **dismantle Obama era regulations in the environment, education and financial spheres**.

But one problem of the Obamacare repeal process was that it was never completely clear what the White House strategy was, other than just waiting pen-in-hand in the Oval Office for a bill to sign.

One approach to a successful reform effort would have been to try to mobilize the nation behind the President through visits outside his political comfort zone in areas where he has strong support, and to build momentum for the bill with televised presidential addresses.

He chose not to take the path -- possibly because the bill was seen by so many people as an unworkable solution to the problems with Obamacare.

The White House put at least a show of presidential zeal over the weekend, revealing that Trump called senators, as he had done on the way home from his trip to Paris last week.

But Trump's Twitter account also shows that in the last few days, the President was far more interested in other issues -- including the spectacle of his trip to France's Bastille Day parade and the fallout from his son Donald Trump Jr.'s meeting with a Russian lawyer.

Tuesday morning, Trump again turned to social media to convey his mindset.

"As I have always said, let ObamaCare fail and then come together and do a great healthcare plan. Stay tuned!" he said.

# The Cruelty and Cynicism of Trump’s Transgender Ban

*The President’s tweets are a naked attempt to divert attention from his scandals.*

By David Remnick

New Yorker

July 26, 2017

*Today’s outrage—they seem to come at least once daily—doesn’t merely reflect Trump’s low character.*

Nearly a half century ago, young Donald Trump—a Wharton graduate, and an avid player of squash, football, and tennis—scored a 1-Y medical deferment. Hundreds of thousands of young men were being deployed to Vietnam. Trump had some bone spurs. He then limped happily into his father’s real-estate business without delay.

When Trump was interviewed by the *Times* about his deferment during the 2016 campaign, [he admitted](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/us/politics/donald-trump-draft-record.html) that the foot condition was “temporary” and “minor”—usually orthotics or stretching eased the pain—and yet, “I had a doctor that gave me a letter—a very strong letter on the heels.” He promised the paper that he would look for the letter. Amazingly, it never turned up. Later, however, his unforgettable physician, Dr. Harold N. Bornstein, assured the nation that Trump, if elected, “will be the healthiest individual ever elected to the presidency.”

On Wednesday morning, the Commander-in-Chief declared by tweet-fiat that, “after consultation with my Generals and military experts,” he had decided to reverse an Obama Administration decision and **bar transgender individuals from serving in the military “in any capacity.”** Trump tweeted further, “Our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming . . . victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

Let’s begin with the retrograde cruelty. There are thousands of transgender people already serving among the 1.3 million active-duty members of the military. These are people who have volunteered their service and have potentially put their lives on the line, and yet their President, who managed to come up with a flimsy doctor’s note back in the day, **denies them their dignity, their equality**. He will not “accept or allow” them in the military. Imagine the scale of this insult.

However, today’s outrage—they seem to come at least once daily—is not merely one that reflects on Trump’s low character. It also reveals yet another layer of his political cynicism, and his willingness to use any tactical means available to try to emerge whole from his current predicament.

The President is in the midst of a **colossal scandal**, and the country, to an increasing measure, knows it. It’s not merely a matter of poor popularity polls. A sizable portion of the country wants to be rid of him and suspects he is unworthy of his office. Six months into his Presidency, according to a *USA Today*/Media Ethics poll, the country is split on whether or not he should be impeached, with forty-two per cent on either side of the question. The scandal is broad-based, but it surely includes (but is not limited to) contacts with Russian officials during the campaign and potential **collusion** to undermine the Clinton campaign; the **constant lying** about same; the firing of James Comey; the **threats** to [fire Jeff Sessions](http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/donald-trump-turns-against-jeff-sessions-big-league) and Robert Mueller; the appalling **vulgarity** of his public performances (cf. the “Playboy After Dark” speech before the [Boy Scouts of America](http://www.newyorker.com/news/amy-davidson-sorkin/donald-trump-tramples-on-boy-scout-values)); the accumulating evidence of a history of **sleazy business practices** and partners; and the level of sheer incompetence in the West Wing.

It is implausible that Trump paid much attention to his highest-ranking generals, or to experts, generally; Secretary of Defense [James Mattis](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/05/29/james-mattis-a-warrior-in-washington) has **supported transgender individuals** joining the military. And the hardly radical [Rand Corporation](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/RB9900/RB9909/RAND_RB9909.pdf) has published an in-depth study refuting the idea that transgender soldiers are somehow expensive, or that they undermine the morale and cohesion of the military over all. Trump’s decision to bar transgender people from the military is **pure politics**, **cheap and cruel** politics, a naked attempt to divert attention from his woes, to hold on to support from his base—a base that he believes will cheer his latest attempt to do battle with the secular-humanist coastal élites who are so obsessed with identity politics. (One Administration official [told](https://twitter.com/jonathanvswan/status/890202683721863168) Axios’s Jonathan Swan that the move was intended to force Democrats from Rust Belt states to take “complete ownership of this issue.”) In other words, it is a decision straight out of the **Steve Bannon playbook**. Cue the organs of the alt-right press.

Trump likes to declare what a “disaster” the military is, how deeply it has fallen into disrepair, and how he will be its salvation. When you begin to consider the meanness of what Trump has done, it is worth remembering him saying that he was “smarter” than the generals on military matters, and that he mocked John McCain’s service in Vietnam because “**I like people who weren’t captured**.” When you begin to think about the scale of this offense, it is worth remembering [Khizr Khan](http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/khizr-khan-gold-star-father-on-the-new-refugee-ban), the Gold Star father who lost a son in Iraq, addressing Trump directly from the lectern of the Democratic National Convention: “You have sacrificed nothing and no one.”

*David Remnick has been editor of The New Yorker since 1998 and a staff writer since 1992.*

# Trump in Phoenix

**Axios AM**

**By Mike Allen ·Aug 23, 2017**

**Speaking to the American Legion**national convention in Reno today, according to prepared remarks provided to Axios AM, President Trump will declare that it's**"time to heal the wounds that have divided us."**

**But in Phoenix last night,**consumed by grievance, he unleashed some of the most divisive and deceptive attacks against the media in presidential history. He accused the media of fanning the flames of racist protest, being anti-American, trying to erase our heritage, and then turning off cameras during his speech to hide his truth (it was all being carried live).

**It was as if Trump,**who was introduced by Vice President Pence,was taunting the rowdy crowd to turn on reporters.

**Blaming "damned dishonest"**reporters for the racial tension in America, he dramatically reread his past statements on Charlottesville — but omitted the "many sides" and "both sides" assertions that drew criticism even from top Republicans.

**After the rally**, police broke up protest crowds with tear gas, pepper spray, stun grenades and rubber bullets.

**The raucous crowd**interrupted him with chants: "USA! USA! USA! ... CNN sucks! CNN sucks! CNN sucks! ... Build that wall! Build that wall! Build that wall!"

**Trump said:** "CNN does not want its falling viewership to watch what I'm saying tonight, I can tell you." But his remarks were being carried live on both CNN and CNN International (which we get on Fios here at the Axios AM Executive Residence).

**Trump made lots of news:**

* **"Believe me,**if we have to close down our government, we're building that wall."
* **May pardon** Sheriff Joe Arpaio: "I'll make a prediction. I think he's going to be just fine, OK (APPLAUSE) ... But I won't do it tonight."
* **"We will renegotiate NAFTA**, or we will terminate NAFTA. I personally don't think you can make a deal without a termination, but we're going to see what happens, OK? ... You're in good hands, I can tell you."
* **On the CEOs** who left his business councils: "When it got a little heat with the lies from the media, they sort of said, 'Oh, we'll take a pass.' ...**I remember the ones that did."**
* **"But people** are now calling me, people that have been, like, 'we'll take a pass': '**Don, can we get together for lunch?**Let's do it privately, instead of through a council.' ... They are calling, and they're saying: 'How about getting together privately?'"
* **"I don't believe** that any president has accomplished as much as this president in the first six or seven months. I really don't believe it."

**More from Trump's** 77-minute speech at a "Make America Great Again" campaign rally, ending at 11:25 p.m. ET:

* **"[V]ery dishonest media**, those people right up there with all the cameras." (BOOING)
* "But they don't report the facts. Just like they don't want to report that I spoke out forcefully against hatred, bigotry and violence and strongly condemned the neo-Nazis, the White Supremacists, and the KKK." (APPLAUSE)
* "I hope they're showing how many people are in this room, but they won't. They don't even do that. The only time they show the crowds is when there's a disrupter or an anarchist in the room."
* "All the networks — I mean, CNN is really bad, but ABC this morning — I don't watch it much, but I'm watching in the morning, and they have little George Stephanopoulos talking to Nikki Haley, right? Little George."
* "[T]hey asked me, ... what about race relations in the United States? Now I have to say they were pretty bad under Barack Obama. That I can tell you."
* On historic statues being removed: "They're trying to take away our culture. They are trying to take away our history. And our weak leaders, they do it overnight. These things have been there for 150 years, for 100 years. You go back to a university, and it's gone. Weak, weak people."

**This fire will keep burning.** Sean Hannity said on Fox News at 11 p.m., as he passed the live coverage over to Bret Baier, that his opening monologue tonight "will be directed at the corrupt media."

**Be smart:**Trump was on Sen. John McCain's turf, and called him out (without mentioning his name) for voting against the health-care bill — but didn't wish the state's most famous politician a speedy recovery from cancer.

* **Reporters at the rally** say the taunting of the press increased as he ratcheted up his remarks. In this fevered environment, some journalist could get beaten, or worse.

# What Trump has undone

* By Philip Bump
* August 24, 2017
* Washington Post

Fact Check: Has President Trump signed more bills than any other president?

President Trump has repeatedly argued that he’s done more than any other recent president. That’s not true, as measured by the amount of legislation he’s been able to sign. It is true, though, that Trump **has *undone* a lot of things** that were put into place by his predecessors, including President Barack Obama.

Since Jan. 20, Trump’s administration has enthusiastically and systematically undone or uprooted rules, policies and tools that predated his time in office. Below, a list of those changes, roughly organized by subject area.

## The economy

* **Withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.** The trade deal would have established a trade partnership between the United States and countries on the Pacific Rim.
* **Reversal of a rule that would mandate that oil and gas companies**[report](http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/03/politics/senate-transparency-oil-rule/index.html)**payments to foreign governments.** The Securities and Exchange Commission will no longer receive this information.
* **Ended limits on the ability of states to**[drug test those seeking unemployment benefits](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/drug-testing-unemployment-senate-236049)**.**
* **Repeal of a rule allowing**[states to create retirement savings plans](http://money.cnn.com/2017/05/03/retirement/state-retirement-plans-senate/index.html)**for private-sector workers.**
* **Repeal of a bill that**[mandated](https://ohsonline.com/articles/2017/02/27/congress-moving-bill-to-repeal-2016-recordkeeping-rule.aspx)**that employers maintain records of workplace injuries.**
* **Killed a rule mandating that government contractors**[disclose past violations of labor law](http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-labor-law-20170306-story.html)**.**

## The justice system

* **Rescinded an Obama effort to reduce mandatory sentences.** Attorney General Jeff Sessions [ordered](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/sessions-issues-sweeping-new-criminal-charging-policy/2017/05/11/4752bd42-3697-11e7-b373-418f6849a004_story.html) that prosecutors seek the most stringent penalties possible in criminal cases.
* **Reversed the government’s position on a voter ID law in Texas.** Under the Obama administration, the Justice Department [argued](http://www.npr.org/2017/02/27/517558469/justice-department-reverses-position-on-texas-voter-id-law-case) that the law had discriminatory intent. Under Sessions, Justice withdrew that complaint. On Wednesday, a federal court [threw out](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/federal-judge-again-throws-out-texas-voter-id-law/2017/08/23/edcfb028-884d-11e7-96a7-d178cf3524eb_story.html?utm_term=.9746d11334ef) the law.
* **Reviewed Justice Department efforts to**[address problematic police departments](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/us/justice-department-jeff-sessions-baltimore-police.html?mcubz=0)**.** An effort to address concerns in the Baltimore Police Department was delayed.

## The environment

* **Withdrew from the Paris climate agreement.**
* **Blocked the Clean Power Plan.** The plan implemented under Obama [focused](https://www.theverge.com/2017/3/28/15076700/trump-clean-power-plan-executive-order-climate-change-health) on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants.
* [Ended a study](http://www.wvgazettemail.com/news-politics/20170821/trumps-interior-department-moves-to-stop-mountaintop-removal-study)**on the health effects of mountaintop-removal mining.** The process involves blasting away the tops of hills and mountains to get at coal seams under the surface.
* **Rescinded a rule mandating that**[rising sea levels](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-infrastructure-idUSKCN1AV1ZI)**be considered when building public infrastructure in flood-prone areas.**
* **Reversed an Obama**[ban on drilling](https://www.theverge.com/2017/4/28/15451652/donald-trump-executive-order-offshore-oil-gas-drilling-climate-change)**for oil in the Arctic.**
* **Reviewed the status of national monuments for possible reversal.** In April, Trump signed an executive order [ordering](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/04/25/zinke-to-review-large-national-monuments-created-since-1996-to-make-sure-the-people-have-a-voice/) a review of monuments added in the past 20 years, opening up the possibility that some areas previously set aside would have that status revoked.
* **Withdrew a rule**[regulating fracking](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/03/15/interior-department-to-withdraw-obama-era-fracking-rule-filings-reveal/?utm_term=.64463ac7f11e)**on public land.**
* **Reversed a**[ban on plastic bottles](http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/08/18/544456726/trump-administration-reverses-bottled-water-ban-in-national-parks)**at national parks.**
* **Rescinded a limit on the**[number of sea animals](http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-trump-marine-mammals-20170612-story.html)**that can be trapped or killed in fishing nets.**
* **Delayed and potentially rolled back**[automotive fuel efficiency standards](http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/341456-trump-administration-to-reconsider-penalties-for-car-efficiency)**.**
* **Repealed the**[Waters of the United States rule](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/06/27/trump-administration-to-propose-repealing-rule-giving-epa-broad-authority-over-water-pollution/?utm_term=.6b5cd46df3f0)**.** This rule expanded the definition of water bodies that were protected by the Environmental Protection Agency.
* **Ended a rule banning**[dumping waste from mining into streams](http://thehill.com/regulation/energy-environment/317193-house-to-repeal-obama-coal-rule-wednesday)**.**
* **Reversed a rule banning**[hunting bears and wolves](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/22/521089304/congress-rolls-back-obama-era-rule-on-hunting-bears-and-wolves-in-alaska)**.** The ban applied to federal refuges in Alaska and prohibited hunting predators using certain methods.
* **Repealed a rule that would have**[centralized federal land management](https://riponadvance.com/stories/trump-signs-repeal-blm-planning-2-0-regulation-congressional-review-act/)**.**
* **Removed**[a bike-sharing station](https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-08-16/trump-removes-obamas-white-house-bikeshare-station)**at the White House.**

## Foreign policy and immigration

* **Cut the number of migrants and refugees allowed from seven predominantly Muslim countries.**
* **Repealed a rule allowing**[transgender individuals](https://www.wsj.com/articles/white-house-sets-rules-for-military-transgender-ban-1503534757)**to serve in the military.**
* **Rolled back of Obama’s**[outreach to the Cuban government](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/world/trump-cuba-policy/?utm_term=.3803ea5e2aae)**.**
* **Ended the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program.** DAPA [extended](https://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2017/06/trump-rolls-back-dapa-program/530571/) protections for some immigrant parents whose children were citizens of or residents in the United States.

## Education

* **Withdrew federal protections for**[transgender students](http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/22/politics/doj-withdraws-federal-protections-on-transgender-bathrooms-in-schools/index.html)**in schools.** Under the rule approved by Obama, transgender students could use school bathrooms that corresponded to their gender identities.
* **Reversed a rule that**[mandated how achievement is measured](https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2017-03-27/trump-nixes-obama-era-rules-for-new-federal-k-12-law)**in schools.**
* **Repealed a rule**[mandating](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/senate-overturns-obama-era-regulations-on-teacher-preparation/2017/03/08/b8cf127a-041c-11e7-b9fa-ed727b644a0b_story.html?utm_term=.b6ad051d83f2)**certain requirements for teacher-preparation programs.**

## Other policy areas

* **Revoked a**[ban on denying funding](http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/04/13/523795052/trump-signs-law-giving-states-option-to-deny-funding-for-planned-parenthood)**for Planned Parenthood at the state level.**
* **Repealed a rule mandating that Internet service providers**[seek permission](http://nymag.com/selectall/2017/03/why-congress-is-dismantling-the-fccs-internet-privacy-rules.html)**before selling personal information.**
* **Reversed a rule that would**[ban gun sales](http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/civil-rights/316139-congress-should-rescind-social-security-regulation-that)**to those deemed “mentally defective” by the government.**
* **Slow or nonexistent staffing at**[the Senate-confirmed](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-administration-appointee-tracker/database/)**and management level across administration agencies.**
* **Repealed a rule mandating**[consolidation of transit planning authorities](https://www.enotrans.org/article/senate-unanimously-passes-legislation-repeal-mpo-consolidation-rule/)**.**

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| Shrinking thing: The president |
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| Rebecca Zisser / Axios  August 30, 2017 |
|  |
| **As President Trump formally launches** his tax-reform drive this afternoon with a no-details, "vision-casting" speech in Springfield, Missouri, the self-inflicted wounds of the past 222 days are adding up*)*  **The "most powerful man in the world"** is suddenly looking mighty powerless:   * **Speaker Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell**are going their own way on tax reform. Hill sources believe his original targets, including a 15% corporate rate, are dead. * **SecDef Mattis**didn't immediately embrace his full ban on transgender troops. * **His Justice Department** won't drop the Russia probe. * **Courts** won't allow his full Muslim ban. * **Mexico** won't pay for his wall. * **Congress**won't pay for his wall. * **The Senate** won't pass his promised health-care reform. * **Gary Cohn and Sec State Tillerson** won't tolerate his Charlottesville response. * **North Korea** won't heed his warnings. * **China** doesn't fear his trade threats. * **CEOs**won't sit on his councils. * **Mexico and Canada**won't bend to his will on NAFTA.   **19 days in August: Trump's road not taken ...**Now imagine where Trump would be today*if* he had instantly (and only) condemned the racist violence in Charlottesville, blown off the Arizona meltdown rally, and held off on the Arpaio pardon till the usual protocol could be followed.  **The press would be writing** about a **new, late-summer Trump**who had managed two crises like a normal president, and cleaned house of the most toxic "America First" true believers. His Texas trip would have gotten a high grade, with his trademark brio and well-received remarks.  **Now snap back to reality:**Instead, Trump has escalated his war with the judiciary, media and Republican establishment. At the same time, he has created a monster on the outside in the form of Steve Bannon and his merry band of Breitbart brawlers.  **And he chose that path**with crises sprouting all around:   * **An epic flood**that will cost taxpayers billions in damages and consume Congress when it returns. * **North Korea**crossing new lines, rattling markets. * **Racial tensions**boiling. * **Rising fear**of a government shutdown, at the end of September or December. * **Increasing pessimism**in a once-buoyant business community. * **Daily clues**emerging of an expansive, ominous Mueller investigation.   **Be smart:** Chief of Staff John Kelly has instilled order and process to the White House. But there's not even a hint of a governing strategy that calms crises, or results in substantive legislative wins. |

# THE LIMITS OF BEING A TRUMPOCRAT

**Politico Playbook**

**By Jake Sherman, Anna Palmer, and Daniel Lippman**

**September 10, 2017**

... Let's try not to divine whether **PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP**will continue to **work with Democrats** at the expense of Republicans. **Nobody knows the answer to that**. Let's also take a deep breathe and recognize that Trump didn't cut some transformative deal for the history books. He extended the debt limit and government funding by three months and agreed to billions to aid hurricane victims. Barack **Obama worked with Republicans to slash government spending**. Trump didn't do anything like that. What Trump did do last week, whether he knows it or not, is create a governing coalition of 150 Republicans and all Democrats. This won't work everywhere. Let's explore where **insiders** think they have a shot, and where they don't:

**-- INFRASTRUCTURE:**The White House has said nothing about what it would like to do when it comes to a massive infrastructure bill. But Trump has said he wants to spend lots of money. A chunk of Republicans -- the Freedom Caucus and other fiscal conservatives -- won't be interested in a bunch of unpaid-for deficit spending. But there are moderates in the Senate and House GOP who, presented with the right package, could see benefits in a large-scale public works project. Republican lawmakers from upstate New York, the Midwest and even the outer edges of big cities would also likely be on board.The country's **crumbling infrastructure** has long been an issue that Democrats have tried to take on. Crafted the right way, not only moderate Democrats, but others could also support an infrastructure package. This could be an area where Trump finds natural allies in both parties.

**-- HEALTH CARE:**It's difficult to truly understand what Trump wants to do when it comes to health care, since he has been on **many sides** of the issue. But if he wants Democratic cooperation, he'd have to scrap pushing for Obamacare repeal and back a more limited plan to enact fixes. This would infuriate some Republicans, who are angry enough that, nine months into an all Republican Washington, Obamacare is still ticking. Lawmakers and lobbyists aren't optimistic that Trump can find enough common ground to get Republicans and Democrats on the same page.

**-- TAXES:**Democrats have been completely shut out of the tax reform discussions. The only people resembling Democrats in the room are **Gary Cohn** and **Steven Mnuchin**, two Trump administration officials who have donated to Democrats throughout their lives. It would take a miracle to change course at this point. **A REMINDER:**We are far from tax reform becoming a reality. Both chambers need to pass a budget, and we have **not seen a shred of paper** from the closed-door tax meetings.

**-- BASIC GOVERNANCE AND THE WALL:**Democrats and Republicans can keep the lights on together -- that much we've seen. They can lift the debt ceiling, if there are no legislative riders. Here's where Trump could run into a major problem. We're not sure if you've heard but the president wants to build a wall on the border with Mexico. He will not be able to do that with Democrats -- they are a hard no on a border wall. Can he strike some sort of deal to put the DREAM Act into law in exchange for an uptick border security? Sure. But that would be awfully tricky.

**MR. PRESIDENT -- YOU STILL HAVE TO BE NICE TO MCCONNELL AND RYAN.**Why? Because Democrats are in the minority in both chambers and have extremely limited ability to bring bills to the floor.

**FROM 30K FEET -- NYT'S PETER BAKER: "Bound to No Party, Trump Upends 150 Years of Two-Party Rule":**"President Trump demonstrated this past week that he still imagines himself a solitary cowboy as he abandoned Republican congressional leaders to forge a short-term fiscal deal with Democrats. Although elected as a Republican last year, Mr. Trump has shown in the nearly eight months in office that he is, in many ways, **the first independent** to hold the presidency since the advent of the current two-party system around the time of the Civil War.

**"In recent weeks,**he has quarreled more with fellow Republicans than with the opposition, blasting congressional leaders on Twitter, ousting former party officials in his White House, embracing **primary challenges to incumbent lawmakers** who defied him and blaming Republican figures for not advancing his policy agenda. On Friday, he addressed discontent about his approach with a Twitter post that started, 'Republicans, sorry,' as if he were not one of them, and said party leaders had a 'death wish.' ...

**"None of which means**that Mr. Trump has suddenly transformed himself into a center-hugging moderate. More situational than ideological -- critics would say opportunist -- Mr. Trump adjusts to the moment, and his temporary alignment with Democrats could easily unravel tomorrow. The deal he cut, after all, merely postponed a fight over spending and debt for three months. **It did not resolve any substantive disagreements**." [http://nyti.ms/2wigEPH](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=c655f0c5a1f8233e955d8ff9cfbb0bcaecf11bf49a669ad916109a0c2372985cf314ce63ca313bd529c93af0ac801b82336578fc3c6121e9)

**WAPO'S TAKE -- "'Trump betrays everyone': The president has a long record as an unpredictable ally,"**by Ashley Parker and Phil Rucker: "President Trump prepared for the pivotal meeting with congressional leaders by huddling with his senior team - his chief of staff, his legislative director and the heads of Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget - to game out various scenarios on how to fund the government, raise the debt ceiling and provide Hurricane Harvey relief. But one option they never considered was the that one the president ultimately chose: cutting a deal with Democratic lawmakers, to the shock and ire of his own party.

**"In agreeing to tie Harvey aid to a three-month extension** of the debt ceiling and government funding, Trump burned the people who are ostensibly his allies. The president was an unpredictable - and, some would say, untrustworthy -- negotiating partner with not only congressional Republicans but also with his Cabinet members and top aides. Trump saw a deal that he thought was **good for him** -- and he seized it." [http://wapo.st/2wSD91d](http://go.politicoemail.com/?qs=c655f0c5a1f8233ea431d20380b3ee9a4d583a66b0e880dc45740820e769a9414a51d497fd94bcabeeb2ae69db3f4df438422c50e4e9f0bb)

**-- DESPITE ALL THE GOP HAND-WRINGING,**senior GOP aides say that everyone is being **too dramatic** and that lawmakers need to take a deep breath. This middle-of-the-road stuff is not permanent.

# Morality Is Negotiable for Mr. Trump

**By Editorial Board, New York Times**

SEPT. 15, 2017

This week President Trump [reached a deal with Democrats](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/politics/trump-dinner-schumer-pelosi-daca-obamacare.html) to enshrine into law protections for young illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children. Within a matter of days, these young people went from fearing deportation to homelands some had never known, to having a potential shot at citizenship.

Did this mark the arrival of a new, compassionate, capable Donald Trump?

Sadly, probably not. Mr. Trump’s actions are **rarely underpinned by principles**, or a vision of who we are as a nation. Even on matters of near-perfect moral clarity, he is often **transactional and capricious**. If he does the right thing, there must be an angle.

His word is never final; it’s only the latest in a never-ending set of tactical adjustments made with one eye on his poll numbers, and the other on Fox News. If it benefits Mr. Trump personally to renege on this week’s  [tentativedeal](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/us/politics/trump-daca-dreamers.html)  with Democrats and woo xenophobes and bigots instead of reviving the “Dream Act,” he will.

If his core supporters thought his sympathy for Dreamers was evidence that he was getting wobbly on immigration, he made clear they could still count on his sympathy for racists. Soon after [Tim Scott of South Carolina](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/politics/trump-tim-scott-charlottesville-race.html), the Senate’s lone black Republican, privately scolded him for his “sterile” response to “hate groups who over three centuries of this country’s history have made it their mission to create upheaval in minority communities,” Mr. Trump once again asserted what he saw as an [equivalence between the white supremacists](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/us/politics/trump-charlottesville-tim-scott.html) who marched in Charlottesville, Va., and those who aggressively opposed them. And while he did sign a c[ongressional resolution](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/congress-trump-hate-groups-charlottesville.html?mcubz=3) denouncing these hate groups, his refusal to unequivocally reject them is what led to the unanimously approved measure to begin with.

It was Mr. Trump, too, who had placed those young immigrants in jeopardy of deportation last week, when he had his attorney general, **Jeff Sessions**, [announce an end](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/opinion/trump-daca-dreamers-rescind.html) to President Barack Obama’s five-year-old executive order — Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals — which let them live, work and go to school in the United States. Almost immediately after Mr. Sessions denounced these “Dreamers” as **job-stealers and potential gang members,** Mr. Trump seemed to shift, amid a wave of outrage at the administration’s cruelty.

On Wednesday night, Mr. Trump had dinner with **Chuck Schumer** and **Nancy Pelosi**, the Democratic leaders of the Senate and House, who later [announced](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/politics/trump-dinner-schumer-pelosi-daca-obamacare.html?action=click&contentCollection=Politics&module=RelatedCoverage&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article) that the president had agreed to their proposal “to enshrine the protections of DACA into law quickly,” along with border security measures, but no border wall.

What followed the next day was the now familiar **ping-ponging of tweets and contradictory assertions** from Mr. Trump and others that threw Congress into chaos, as Republicans tried to parse what the president meant. There would be a path to citizenship, or there would be no such path? The wall was being built, or the wall would be built later?

Conservatives erupted. **Ann Coulter**, author of “In Trump We Trust,” unleashed a stream of protests, demanding that he **be impeached**.

Of course, Mr. Trump always saw the wall as more of a campaign slogan than a possibility. Even congressional Republicans are balking at handing him billions for a quixotic project that won’t be completed for years, if ever.

Amid Thursday’s uproar, the conservative Never-Trump stalwart **William Kristol** had sound advice on dealing with Mr. Trump.

“To liberals, centrists & conservatives,” he [wrote](https://twitter.com/BillKristol/status/908299164215386115), “work for good policies during Trump’s presidency; **never lose sight of his unfitness to be president**.”

No one should cheer Mr. Trump’s latest moves as a pivot toward principles. So far, his main operating principle seems to be service to himself.

# Trump addresses the United Nations

AXIOS

September 19, 2017

Alayna Treene

President Trump addressed the UN General Assembly today, discussing everything from the escalating North Korean threat to the Iran nuclear deal. It was the first such speech of Trump's presidency, and he used the platform to urge the world's leaders unite in aggressively ramping up pressure on Pyongyang.

## Hardline on North Korea:

"No nation on earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles," Trump said. "The U.S. has great strength and patience but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea."

More on North Korea

* "[Rocket man](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/909384837018112000) [Kim Jong Un] is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime."
* "We cannot let a murderous regime continue these destabilizing activities."
* "If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph."

## Overall message to UN member countries

* "I will always put America first, as you should always put your countries first... in America, we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone but rather, to let it shine as an example for everyone to watch."
* "We can no longer be taken advantage of or enter into a one-sided deal where the U.S. gets nothing in return."
* "Major portions of the world are in conflict, and some, in fact, are going to hell. But the powerful people in this room under the guidance and auspices of the United Nations can solve many of these vicious and complex problems."

## Iran regime

* "The Iran deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into...an embarrassment."
* "The Iranian government masks a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of democracy... It is time for the entire world to join us in demanding that Iran's government end its pursuit of death and destruction."
* The U.S. and its foreign allies will "crush loser terrorists."

## Syria and the Assad regime

* "The actions of the criminal regime of Bashar al Assad, including the use of chemical weapons against his own citizens... shock the conscience of every decent person. No society can be safe if banned chemical weapons are allowed to spread."
* On refugees migrating to other countries: "Uncontrolled migration is greatly unfair for the receiving and sending countries."

## The "very real crisis" in Venezuela

* "We are prepared to take further action if the government of Venezuela persists" on its authoritarian path.
* "The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented."

## Cuba

* The Cuban regime is "corrupt, destabilizing," and the U.S. will not lift sanctions on the Cuban government until "tough reforms" are seen.

# Trump Continues to Insult Widely

By Martin Hittelman

September 25, 2017

This week Trump and the Republican leadership in Washington will attempt to get passed a regressive revision of Obama Care, begin to revise the tax codes in order to lower tax rates for the very rich to 15%, and elect a Strange candidate for Senate in Alabama. All of these attempts do not currently have the support to actually happen.

This last week Trump went on a rant at the United Nations. He insulted the United Nations itself and singled out North Korea, Venezuela, and Cuba in particular. He even called the head of the North Korean government “Rocketman.”

Trump also attacked professional athletes who used their constitutional rights to protest his policies on and off the field and court. In particular, he attacked Steph Curry for stating that he was not in favor of the Golden State basketball team visiting the White House and those NFL players who go down on one knee during the national anthem to protest racism in the United States. He said that the “sons of bitches should be fired.” Even NFL team owners who had donated more than $1 million each for Trump’s inauguration called him on his attack on their players.

These new attacks come on the heels of attacks on Democrats, Republicans in Congress including John McCain, Congress itself, the military, the courts, the news media, the State Department, the FBI, various television personalities and shows, and even the Pope. He has even attacked some of his own appointed officials.

This weekend Trump stated that he was putting into effect a new restriction on travel to the United States from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. It appears that he will make more restrictive the list of exemptions.

# The Rest of 2017 after October 13, 2017

The following is on the agenda before the end of the year.

-- The government needs to be funded by Dec. 8.

-- The debt ceiling needs to be lifted by Dec. 8.

-- Congress is considering additional Iran-related bills.

-- The children's health insurance program -- SCHIP -- has expired.

-- The president has already asked Congress to work on a new policy for so-called Dreamers to replace DACA.

-- Trump just announced he will stop making CSR payments, which help insure poor people. Congress might get involved in this

-- Congress is trying to clear tax reform by the end of 2017. Republicans fear they will lose both chambers if they do not pass tax legislation.

**SEN. THAD COCHRAN,**a Republican from Mississippi, is recovering from a procedure, and people in the Capitol are worried he might not come back to work Monday when the Senate returns. **ROY MOORE,**the Alabama Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate, could be a senator by Dec. 13. He has all but vowed to oppose Mitch McConnell at every turn.

**...AND**there are just 28 legislative days left.

# Trump’s Alternative reality

**Aios**

**By Mke Allen**

**October 17, 2017**

**President Trump** "goes there, on just about every topic imaginable," as NBC's Brian Williams put it, during a pair of Q&As, two hours apart yesterday — in the [Cabinet Room](http://link.axios.com/click/10962853.99870/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2hpdGVob3VzZS5nb3YvdGhlLXByZXNzLW9mZmljZS8yMDE3LzEwLzE2L3JlbWFya3MtcHJlc2lkZW50LXRydW1wLWNhYmluZXQtbWVldGluZz91dG1fc291cmNlPW5ld3NsZXR0ZXImdXRtX21lZGl1bT1lbWFpbCZ1dG1fY2FtcGFpZ249bmV3c2xldHRlcl9heGlvc2FtJnN0cmVhbT10b3Atc3Rvcmllcw/59771e1cbcb59c6d5e8b459bB7be6cb5b), and with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in the [Rose Garden](http://link.axios.com/click/10962853.99870/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2hpdGVob3VzZS5nb3YvdGhlLXByZXNzLW9mZmljZS8yMDE3LzEwLzE2L3JlbWFya3MtcHJlc2lkZW50LXRydW1wLWFuZC1zZW5hdGUtbWFqb3JpdHktbGVhZGVyLW1pdGNoLW1jY29ubmVsbC1qb2ludD91dG1fc291cmNlPW5ld3NsZXR0ZXImdXRtX21lZGl1bT1lbWFpbCZ1dG1fY2FtcGFpZ249bmV3c2xldHRlcl9heGlvc2FtJnN0cmVhbT10b3Atc3Rvcmllcw/59771e1cbcb59c6d5e8b459bBcbedddf7):

* **Trump says** he and McConnell are "closer than ever before." Both men and their staffs have been trashing each other in public and private for months.
* **Trump says** other presidents "didn't make calls" to families of soldiers killed in duty. **They did**.
* **Trump says** Obamacare is "dead." His repeated efforts to repeal **it failed**.
* **Trump says**it's been established that "no collusion" took place with the Russians. Bob Mueller is interrogating the president's associates and advisers on this very point in real time.
* **Trump says** he "already" has "the votes right now" for a bipartisan health care fix. **He doesn't**.

**Sound smart:** The damnedest thing is that **not a single bullet point I just wrote is disputable**. While every one of those things the President said was.

* **Why it matters:**It's almost impossible for the media to cover these press conferences — or for Republicans to discern what he wants and how he plans to get it — because Trump spreads fake news while calling real news fake. This isn't new. And, yes, 35% of voters don't seem to care. But that doesn't make it any less dangerous.

**Yesterday's keepers:**

* **On GOP senators:**"I'm not going to blame myself, I'll be honest. They are not getting the job done."
* **"Obamacare is finished.** It's dead. It's gone. It's no longer — you shouldn't even mention. It's gone. There is no such thing as Obamacare anymore."
* **On Steve Bannon's**war on McConnell and the Republican establishment: "Steve is ... a friend of mine ... I can understand where Steve Bannon is coming from. ... I know how he feels. ... There are some Republicans, frankly, that should be ashamed of themselves."
* **On whether** he's considering firing Mueller: "No, not at all."
* **"Oh, I hope Hillary runs.**Is she going to run? I hope. Hillary, please run again."

**P.S. Bannon** tells me by email: "McConnell and the GOP Establishment have sown the wind — now be prepared the reap the whirlwind."

# Gold Star Lies

**Chris Weigant, Contributor**

Chris Weigant is a political commentator.

10/20/2017

Huffington Post

Call this the week when **White House Chief of Staff John Kelly** l**ost all remaining shreds of credibility.** Kelly, as we all know, was supposed to bring the **adult supervision** to the White House that would magically transform Donald Trump into a serious president. A retired Marine Corps general was going to whip the White House into shape, and clear sailing ahead would thus quickly ensue.

That was the plan, at any rate. But this week Kelly was used as a political pawn by Trump, and it didn’t exactly go well. By the end of the week, Kelly was just as guilty as his boss of **making stuff up when talking to the press**, or (to be less polite but more accurate) just flat-out lying. Kelly was supposed to elevate Trump up to his level of competence, but instead what has happened is Kelly got dragged down into the sewer with Trump.

Hey, **he knew what he signed up for, right?**

Donald Trump started this whole ugly mess when he was asked at an impromptu press conference on Monday why he hadn’t said a single word about the deadliest military loss the United States has suffered since he became president in the intervening twelve days. Trump responded by insinuating that he did far more than all previous presidents when it came to contacting the Gold Star families of dead soldiers. He later also stated that he had called every family of every soldier who had died in combat since he had become president. **Neither of these claims was true** as the media quickly uncovered.

This put the White House on the defensive, scrambling to correct all of Trump’s many mistakes. Letters were hastily signed and sent out. Calls were hastily made to (some) Gold Star families. And a $25,000 check was finally sent to a dead soldier’s father, a full four months after Trump had promised him the money. No word yet on whether all the Gold Star families have gotten phone calls from Trump yet, but as of midweek there were at least four or five who hadn’t heard from him at all.

General Kelly was in the middle of this whirling disaster. Not only because he is Trump’s chief of staff, but because he was apparently the source of the notion that Barack Obama hadn’t contacted any Gold Star families. Kelly’s 29-year-old son was killed in action and he hadn’t been called by Obama (although he was invited to a Gold Star families meal at the White House later on and sat at Michelle Obama’s table). So Kelly was trotted out in the White House press briefing room in an attempt to get beyond the issue.

Unfortunately for him, he decided to channel his boss, and attacked a congresswoman from the podium. **His attack contained two huge lies**, neither of which has been yet answered by the White House.

The congresswoman in question, Frederica Wilson, had been a lifelong friend of the Gold Star family. She had mentored the dead soldier and helped him get into the military through a youth outreach program she runs (the “5,000 Role Models of Excellence Project”). She had even been the principal of a school the soldier’s father had attended, and had known the family for decades. These people are not just random constituents of a random congresswoman, in other words. This was obvious because she was present with the family when Trump’s condolence call came in. She had been invited by them to listen in, in other words.

Since the call, she has been quite vocal over the content of the call, which she called “insensitive” and “horrible.” According to her, the pregnant wife of the dead soldier was in tears by the end of the call, not through grief over her loss but rather from the **disrespect** the president had shown. “He didn’t even remember his name,” the widow told Representative Wilson.

This was John Kelly’s first mistake. During his appearance in front of the press, Kelly stated: “It stuns me that a member of Congress would have listened in on that conversation. It stuns me. I thought at least that was sacred.” For the record, on the other end of the phone line, John Kelly was sitting in the room with Trump, listening in to the call. So he’s shocked that someone would listen in to a “sacred” call that **he himself was listening in to.** Got it.

But Kelly didn’t stop there. Ignorant of her connections to the family, and apparently still too lazy to research the matter, Kelly has not since backed down from his position that the congresswoman had committed some sort of impropriety by listening to the phone call she had been invited to listen to by the dead soldier’s pregnant widow. Even that wasn’t enough, though. Kelly, in true Trumpian fashion, then **attacked the messenger** even further:

“And a congresswoman stood up, and in a long tradition of empty barrels making the most noise, stood up there in all of that and talked about how she was instrumental in getting the funding for that building [a Miramar, Fla., FBI building named after two slain FBI agents], and how she took care of her constituents because she got the money, and she just called up President Obama, and on that phone call, he gave the money, the $20 million, to build the building, and she sat down.

Wilson responded, on CNN:

“I feel sorry for General Kelly. He has my sympathy for the loss of his son, but he can’t just go on TV and lie on me. I was not even in Congress in 2009 when the money for the building was secured, so that’s a lie. How dare he!”

That’s where things stand, today. Trump lies about Gold Star families, lies about all past presidents (but most especially Barack Obama), and was caught in a lie he told to a Gold Star father’s face to the tune of $25,000. Kelly was then sent out in the teeth of all these lies and made things worse by telling a few whoppers of his own. And, astonishingly, **Sarah Huckabee Sanders** now suggesting that it is “highly inappropriate” to “get into a debate with a four-star Marine general” over whether he had flat-out lied to the press and inaccurately smeared a member of Congress.

The moral of this story is: When you lie down with dogs, don’t be surprised when you wake up with fleas. John Kelly has become more than **just another enabler of Trump’s lies,** he is now making up his own lies to supplement them. That sound you just heard was the last shred of Kelly’s respectability and trustworthiness flying out the window, in other words.

Trump, during the 12 days between when the soldiers were killed and when he uttered a single word about them, “was busy playing lots of golf and amping up the fight over professional athletes kneeling during the national anthem.” So perhaps it was appropriate that the best takedown of Trump all week came from the coach of the **San Antonio Spurs:** “This man in the Oval Office is a **soulless coward** who thinks that he can only become large by belittling others. This has of course been a common practice of his, but to do it in this manner — and to lie about how previous presidents responded to the deaths of soldiers — is as low as it gets.”

The Gold Star story dominated the political news this week, but there were plenty of other things happening as well. Republican Senator Bob Corker led the week off with a rather extraordinary quote: “You cannot publicly castrate your own secretary of state.” This led to an even-more-extraordinary quote, when Rex Tillerson responded after being asked about the castration charge: “I checked. **I’m fully intact.**” Just another day in the Trump cabinet, folks!

Last Sunday, CBS (in a joint effort with the Washington Post) aired a story on 60 Minutes about how Congress kneecapped the D.E.A.’s efforts to rein in the flood of opioids, and this quickly resulted in the withdrawal of the nomination of **Tom Marino** to be the nation’s new “drug czar.” Marino was the one who came up with this odious piece of legislation in the first place, so it’s good to know a Big Pharma shill won’t be watching the henhouse.

Donald Trump’s “**Muslim Ban 3.0**” was shot down by two federal judges this week, meaning his record of losing in court over the issue remains unbroken. Please remember, this was supposed to be a temporary 90-day ban, and Trump’s been pushing it for over 9 months now....

**Puerto Rico** is still in dire straits, as a full month after Hurricane Maria hit fewer than twenty percent of the people have electricity. Trump held a joint appearance with the governor of Puerto Rico, in which he gave himself a 10 for his efforts. The governor refused to agree that Trump was the best president of all time, and the public currently only gives the president 4 out of 10 for his lackadaisical and ineffective recovery efforts.

# Can a pathological Liar judge the Truth?

November 11, 2017

Martin Hittelman

President Trump spoke to reporters on Air Force One regarding his **discussions with Putin**. The transcript released read as follows:

Reporter: Did Russia's attempts to meddle in US elections come up in the conversations?

Trump: "He said he didn't meddle, he said he didn't meddle. I asked him again. You can only ask so many times."

Reporter: Today?

Trump: "I just asked him again. **He said he absolutely did not meddle** in our election, he did not do what they are saying he did."

Reporter: Do you believe him?

Trump: "Well, look, I can't stand there and argue with him, I would rather have him get out of Syria, I would rather get to work with him on the Ukraine rather than arguing about whether or not... that **whole thing was set up by the Democrats.** Look at Podesta, look at all the things that they have done with the **phony dossier**. Those are the big events. But Putin said he did not do what they said he did. But we have a good feeling toward getting things done. If we had a relationship with Russia, that would be a good thing. In fact it would be a great thing, not a bad thing, because he could really help us on **North Korea**. We have a big problem with North Korea and **China is helping us**. And because of the lack of the relationship that we have with Russia, because of this **artificial thing** that's happening with this Democratic-inspired thing. We could really be helped a lot with Russia having to do with North Korea. You know you are talking about **millions and millions of lives**. This isn't baby stuff, this is the real deal. And if Russia helped us in addition to China, that problem would go away a lot faster."

Reporter: On election meddling, did you ask him the question?

Trump: "Every time he sees me he says I didn't do that and I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it. But he says I didn't do that. I think he is very **insulted by it**, which is not a good thing for our country. Because again, if we had a relationship with Russia, North Korea which is our single biggest problem right now, it would help a lot. I think they are doing very well with respect to China, they have cut off financing, they have **cut off lots of oil and lots of other things,** lots of trade and it's having a big impact. But Russia on the other hand may be making up the difference. And if they are, that's not a good thing. So having a relationship with Russia would be a great thing especially as it relates to North Korea."

After his visit in China stated that "I do have a very good relationship with [Xi Jinping]. It's the biggest state—it's the biggest state entrance at the **biggest state dinner** they've ever had. By far. In China. He called it, 'state plus." In fact, he actually said, 'state plus plus,' which is very interesting. But he's, you know, look, again, he's a strong person, he's a very smart person. I like him a lot. **He likes me**. But we represent two very different countries but we get along very well. And that's a good thing that we get along. That's not a bad thing."

Trump also was quoted as stated that "**Hillary** had her stupid reset button that she spelled the word wrong, but she does not have what it takes to have that kind of relationship where you could call or you could do something. But this is really an artificial barrier that's put in front of us for solving problems with Russia. He says that very strongly, he really seems to be insulted by it and he says he didn't do it. He is very, very strong in the fact that he didn't do it. You have President Putin very strongly, vehemently says he has nothing to do with that. Now, you are not going to get into an argument, you are going to **start talking about Syria and the Ukraine.**"

After Trump spoke to the press, CIA chief **Mike Pompeo** released a statement that contradicted Trump’s belief in Pupin’s denial: “The director stands by and has always stood by the January 2017 intelligence community assessment entitled: Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections. The intelligence assessment with regard to Russian election meddling has not changed.”

Trump claims that the **Mueller investigation is inspired by the Democrats** and is simply a hit job.

With regard to the allegations concerning a women who claims to be Putin’s niece, Putin responded that he “only found out about that yesterday from [his spokesman Dmitry] Peskov” but he claimed that the investigation is “some sort of fantasies.”

After a short meeting, Putin and Trump agreed on a joint statement that listed agreements between the US and Russia including how important is to **revive the UN mediated negotiations** known as the Geneva process.

As each stage of the **Mueller investigation** gets closer and closer to the president, Trump’s rhetoric on the investigation has become more shrill. The disclosures regarding **Paul Manafort, Michael Flynn, Stephen Miller, and George Papadopoulos** are painting Trump into a narrowing corner.

# Trump's behavior raises questions of competency

Analysis by Stephen Collinson, CNN

November 29, 2017

Trump pushes tax plan after anti-Muslim tweets

Trump potentially has millions of lives in his hands as the threat of a devastating war with North Korea

It is a fateful time when there will be a premium on Trump's judgment

Yet the President of the United States is raising new questions about his temperament, his judgment and his understanding of the resonance of his global voice and the gravity of his role with a wild sequence of insults, inflammatory tweets and bizarre comments.

On Wednesday Trump caused outrage and sparked fears of violent reprisals against Americans and US interests overseas by retweeting graphic anti-Muslim videos by an extreme far right British hate group. Earlier this week he used a racial slur in front of Native American war heroes. He's attacked global press freedom, after cozying up to autocrats on his recent Asia tour.

And now there are reports that the President has revived conspiracy theories about former President Barack Obama's birthplace and is suggesting an "Access Hollywood" video on which he was heard boasting sexually assaulting women, and for which he apologized last year, had been doctored.

In normal times, it would be a concern that the President is conducting himself in a manner so at odds with the decorum and propriety associated for over two centuries with the office he holds.

But the sudden escalation of the North Korean crisis, following the Stalinist state's launch of its most potent ever missile on Tuesday, takes the world across a dangerous threshold.

If diplomacy is unable to defuse the North Korea crisis, or slow its march to the moment when Kim Jong Un can credibly claim to be able to target all of the United States with a nuclear payload, Trump will face one of the most intricate dilemmas of any modern President. Will he live with the threat posed by a mercurial, wildly unpredictable adversary? Or, will he launch what could turn out to be a hugely bloody and destructive war to remove Kim's nuclear threat?

There will be a premium on Trump's judgment, his capacity to absorb the most serious detail and to make choices that could put many, many lives at risk, and draw the United States into escalating situations in Northeast Asia. Trump would be required to switch from the swaggering, untethered political persona he has been reluctant to drop as President into the role of sober statesman, unifying the nation and US allies -- a switch he has rarely achieved so far in his 10 months in power.

On Wednesday, in St. Charles, Missouri, Trump stuck to his preferred name calling, again blasting Kim as "Little Rocket Man" and branding him a "sick puppy" after his White House earlier promised severe new sanctions against Pyongyang. But he didn't elaborate on his vows to "handle" the situation.

For years, Trump, living his life in the glare of the New York tabloids took refuge in convenient alternative truths, constructed his own version of reality and actively promoted conspiracy theories. He maintained that model of behavior as a candidate and a President. But the fact such conduct is coinciding with what could evolve into a major global crisis will force his staff, fellow world leaders, the media and the public to grapple with the implications.

That's the context in which Trump's recent behavior is coloring and is the reason why this moment could turn about to be more significant than the unorthodox and unconventional months of his presidency up to now.

It's also why it's fair to ask questions about his state of mind when, for instance, retweeting explosive videos of doubtful authenticity featured by the far right nationalist group Britain First, as he did on Tuesday.

"I have no idea what would motivate him to do that," former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said on CNN's "New Day" on Tuesday. "To me, it's bizarre and disturbing, particularly when I think of him doing that in the context of North Korea, where moderation, and temperance and thought I think is critical."

Conversations about Trump's fitness and mental state have percolated in Washington for months. They have been fanned by the comments of GOP Sen. Bob Corker who warned the President could spark World War III.

Republican Sen. Jeff Flake last month fired off an explosive Senate speech in which he said that no one should stay silent, "as the norms and values that keep America strong are undermined and as the alliances and agreements that ensure the stability of the entire world are routinely threatened by the level of thought that goes into 140 characters."

On Wednesday, Flake said he was "flummoxed" at Trump's latest behavior after reading his latest Tweets.

"It's very inappropriate. Why? What does that get us? I'm having a hard time understanding it," Flake said, adding that he would start a series of Senate speeches on Trump's disregard for the truth.

In some ways, Trump's latest wild behavior turn gives Republicans yet another problem.

GOP senators will shortly vote on a tax reform bill that if it passes will give Trump a long awaited victory.

But that win will also bolster his prestige and power as President, leaving some to question whether the likes of Flake and Corker are putting principled objections to Trump's leadership aside for their own political reasons.

Trump has always crushed convention and been ready to step on racial, cultural and behavioral taboos, evidenced in his response for instance to Charlottesville riots and willingness to exploit foreign terror attacks to push his immigration policies. In many ways his spurning of political correctness has been key to his appeal. But some close observers of the President say they believe he has become even more unmoored in recent weeks.

"Something is unleashed with him lately," said New York Times reporter Maggie Haberman, who wrote about Trump's return to Birther conspiracy theories in on Wednesday morning.

"I don't know what is causing it, I don't know how to describe it," said Haberman, who is also a CNN contributor.

Whatever is causing it, some of Trump's fellow Republicans are worried about the detrimental effect of his behavior.

"I think it's risky," South Dakota Sen. John Thune told CNN's Dana Bash on Wednesday.

"In light of what's going on in the world right now, and things that we're trying to accomplish, and the threats and the adversaries that we face, I think it's important that our leader, our commander in chief, set the kind of tone that's measured," Thune said.

Trump's supporters often counter that the media is overreacting to his tweets and a style of conduct that often appears designed to cause outrage and offense -- or to distract attention from other political controversies.

They point to the roaring stock market, prospering economy and the dismembering of ISIS in Syria as evidence of a presidency that is doing far better than it appears from news reports.

"There has never been a 10-month presidency that has accomplished what we have accomplished," Trump said in Missouri.

Though some admit they wish he would not be so inflammatory in his tweeting, it is often maintained that his behavior should not be taken literally.

Yet in a time of national crisis, and as Trump's words resonate around the world, that conceit seems a dangerous one, that could lead the President and the rest of the world into misunderstandings and escalation.

At the very least, his behavior is making it tough for other world leaders -- who he will need in times of crisis -- to stand with him.

In the United Kingdom, America's closest ally, there was outrage about the Britain First videos that Trump retweeted, and Prime Minister Theresa May, who has struggled to forge a bond with the President despite his deep unpopularity in her country, was left in a tough political spot.

But White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders effectively said that it did not matter whether the President was spreading genuine videos or not, since he was trying to make a point about the threat of Islamic radicalism.

"Whether it is a real video, the threat is real," Sanders said.

In the end, the President's recent unrestrained conduct also leaves the public with serious questions to consider -- for instance in his preference on many occasions for conspiracy theories over objective truth.

At some point, he might be forced to come before the world and explain why such a potentially bloody war in Asia is necessary.

But his habit of creating alternative realities and eroding trust could come back to haunt him.

# 10 Terrible Things the Trump Administration Did that you Might Have Missed

From Greenpeace

Winter 2017

1. Canceled rule to protect whales from fishing nets
2. Ordered review of National Monuments
3. Revoked rule preventing coal mining companies from dumping in local streams
4. Rejected ban on potentially harmful insecticide
5. Overturned ban on hunting predators in Alaskan Wildlife Refuges
6. Withdrew guidance for federal agencies to include greenhouse gas emissions in environmental reviews
7. Order review and “elimination” of rule protecting tributaries and wetlands under the Clean Water Act
8. Rolled back limits on toxic discharge from power plants into public waterways
9. Proposed to repeal the Clean Power Plan
10. Delayed rule aiming to increase safety at facilities that use hazardous chemicals

# Ten actions that hurt workers during Trump’s first year

How Trump and Congress further rigged the economy in favor of the wealthy

Report • By Josh Bivens, Daniel Costa, Celine McNicholas, Heidi Shierholz, and Marni von Wilpert • January 12, 2018

Economic Policy Institute

The tax cut law that President Trump boasts will make his wealthy friends “a lot richer” is just the latest in a series of betrayals of working people by the administration and Congress since Trump took the oath of office on January 20, 2017. In addition to passing a massive tax cut for wealthy business owners, Trump and Republicans in Congress have rolled back important worker protections, advanced nominees to key administration posts who have a history of exploiting working people, and taken other actions that further rig the system in favor of corporate interests and the wealthiest Americans.

Here are the 10 worst things Congress and Trump have done to undermine pay growth and erode working conditions for the nation’s workers.

## 1 Enacting tax cuts that overwhelmingly favor the wealthy over the average worker

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) signed into law at the end of 2017 provides a permanent cut in the corporate income tax rate that will overwhelmingly benefit capital owners and the top 1 percent. It also includes temporary reductions in the tax rates faced by the richest households and a temporary tax cut for “pass-through” business owners—a provision that has been marketed as a small business tax cut but that will actually deliver an even higher share of benefits to top one percenters than the corporate rate cuts will. While TCJA also includes some temporary cuts that could potentially benefit some low- and moderate-income families, these benefits are both stingy and temporary, whereas the tax cuts for the largest corporations have no expiration date. President Trump’s boast to diners at the $200,000-initiation-fee Mar-a-Lago Club during the holidays says it best: “You all just got a lot richer.”

The net effect of the TCJA is clearly regressive, with 83 percent of the benefits accruing to the top 1 percent by the time it is fully phased in, in 2027, according to the Tax Policy Center. Defenders of the TCJA argue that the benefits of corporate tax cuts will trickle down to workers in the form of faster productivity growth and higher wages, but this claim falls apart in the face of many real-world data points; for one thing, the historically high level of corporate profits proves we do not need to redistribute wealth upward through the tax code to give corporations funds for productivity-enhancing capital investment—they already have the funds they need.

A wide body of research finds that the benefits of a cut in corporate income taxes accrue overwhelmingly to owners of capital instead of to workers. In turn, capital ownership is extraordinarily concentrated at the top of the income distribution. For example, the top 1 percent of households own roughly 40 percent of all stocks, including those owned indirectly in 401(k)s and other savings vehicles.

Besides the permanent cut to corporate tax rates, the TCJA’s temporary cuts to individual income taxes includes a preferential rate for “pass-through” businesses—businesses that pay no corporate taxes but whose owners must pay taxes on profits on their individual tax returns when those profits are “passed through” to them. While this is often described as a tax cut for “small businesses,” that description is misleading. Pass-through income is even more concentrated in the very upper reaches of the income distribution than corporate income, with 69 percent of pass-through income claimed by the richest 1 percent of households. This means that the lion’s share of benefits from a preferential pass-through rate will not go to archetypal small businesses like neighborhood stores or day care operations, but instead to hedge funds, white-shoe law firms, and consulting and accounting firms. And, notably, almost surely the companies that make up the Trump Organization.

## 2 Taking billions out of workers’ pockets by weakening or abandoning regulations that protect their pay

In 2017 the Trump administration hurt workers’ pay in many ways, including acts to dismantle two key regulations that protect the pay of low- to middle-income workers: it failed to defend a 2016 rule strengthening overtime protections for these workers, and it took steps to gut regulations that protect servers from having their tips taken by their employers. These failures to protect workers’ pay could cost workers an estimated $7 billion per year.

Early on the administration voiced opposition to the central component of a 2016 rule updating overtime regulations and, in October 2017, the administration effectively killed the 2016 rule. This action deprived 12.5 million workers of automatic overtime protection and will cost workers an estimated $1.2 billion a year. The 2016 overtime rule was promulgated by the Department of Labor (DOL) to restore lost overtime pay to America’s workers by raising the salary threshold below which workers are automatically eligible for overtime pay—from $23,660 to $47,476. Prior to the 2016 rule, the threshold had not been adequately raised in more than 40 years. As a result, low-level managers at retail and fast food outlets who made only $23,660 a year—lower than the poverty rate for a family of four—could be required to work long hours without any extra pay for the extra hours worked. DOL’s overdue attempt to restore lost pay to America’s workers was blocked in the courts by business interests, while Trump administration officials claimed that the new $47,476 threshold was “too high.” On October 31, 2017, the administration made clear in legal proceedings that it would not defend the rule. This stance ignores the link between outdated worker protections and stagnant wage growth. One reason Americans’ paychecks have not been keeping pace with productivity growth is that millions of low- and middle-wage workers who should have access to overtime protections have been working overtime but not getting paid for it.

In December 2017 the administration took the first step toward weakening the tip protections, which would cost workers another $5.8 billion a year in tips they earned but that would likely be pocketed by employers. The current restrictions on “tip pooling,” instituted by DOL in 2011, allow restaurants to pool the tips servers receive but stipulate that the employer may only share pooled tips with other workers who customarily receive tips, such as bussers and bartenders. Employers are prohibited from retaining any of the pooled tips themselves. On December 4, the Trump Department of Labor took its first major step toward allowing employers to legally take tips earned by workers who rely on tips when it proposed rescinding those restrictions. At first glance, the proposal seems benevolent: restaurants would be able to pool the tips servers receive and share them with untipped employees such as cooks and dishwashers. But, crucially, the repeal would mean that employers are no longer required to distribute pooled tips to other workers: as long as tipped workers earn the minimum wage, the employer can legally pocket their tips. EPI estimates that employers will likely pocket nearly $6 billion per year of their workers’ hard-earned tips each year—around $1,000 a year per tipped worker. As a result of this rule, workers will take home less, and their loss will be employers’ gain.

## 3 Blocking workers from access to the courts by allowing mandatory arbitration clauses in employment contracts

In 2017, the Trump administration—in a virtually unprecedented move—switched sides in a case before the U.S. Supreme Court and is now fighting on the side of corporate interests and against workers. When the Supreme Court was first considering Murphy Oil v. NLRB in 2016, the Obama Justice Department sided with workers. If, as expected, the now-Trump-backed plaintiffs prevail, companies will be able to continue to require employees to sign arbitration agreements with class action waivers—forcing workers to give up their right to file class action lawsuits, taking them out of the courtrooms and into individual private arbitration when their rights on the job are violated. And employers’ use of such agreements is likely to increase if the court rules in favor of the plaintiff.

Forced arbitration is a tool employers use to prevent their employees from seeking justice in court when disputes arise in the workplace. American employers are increasingly requiring workers to sign arbitration agreements in order to get, or keep, their jobs. Arbitration is like a private, for-profit court system, in which the employer usually gets to pick the judge.

Mandatory arbitration panels overwhelmingly favor employers, with employees in mandatory arbitration winning only just about a fifth of the time (21.4 percent). In contrast, they win 36.4 percent of the time in the federal courts and 57.0 percent of the time in state courts. Differences in damages awarded are even greater, with the median or typical award in mandatory arbitration being only about one-fifth of the median award in the federal courts and well under half (43.0 percent) of the median award in the state courts.

Among private-sector nonunion employees, 56.2 percent are subject to mandatory employment arbitration procedures. This means that 60.1 million American workers no longer have access to the courts to protect their legal employment rights and instead must go to arbitration.

Moreover, the events of 2017 brought national attention to what many women have known privately for years: there is still a vast amount of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in America’s workplaces. Mandatory arbitration of employment disputes has fueled the sexual abuse of women by powerful men in politics, business, and the media by barring women from seeking justice against their abusers in court. Forced arbitration prevents victims of sexual harassment from taking their employers to court or even speaking out—under arbitration, most accusations are kept confidential and companies can decide who adjudicates the case.

In 2014, the National Labor Relations Board issued its decision in the Murphy Oil case, finding that arbitration agreements that include class action waivers of all work-related claims are prohibited by the National Labor Relations Act. When the Murphy Oil case was originally headed to the Supreme Court’s docket in 2016, Obama’s Department of Justice filed a brief arguing in favor of the workers. But when Justice Scalia died, the Supreme Court continued this case to the 2017 term. When the briefing resumed in 2017, the Trump Department of Justice switched sides and filed a brief on the side of employers. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case in October 2017 and is expected to deliver a decision before June 2018. And with Justice Gorsuch on the bench, the court will likely give a green light to the proliferation of mandatory arbitration agreements with class action waivers.

## 4 Pushing immigration policies that hurt all workers

The Trump administration has taken a number of extreme actions that will hurt all workers, including pursuing and detaining unauthorized immigrants who were victims of employer abuse and human trafficking—while they were trying to enforce their rights in court—and ending Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers, many of whom have resided in the United States for two decades. But perhaps the most inhumane and ill-advised example has been the administration’s termination of Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Ending DACA is forcing young immigrant workers out of the regulated labor market and into the shadow labor market, where they are easily exploitable by employers by virtue of losing their ability to work lawfully. While a federal district court in California temporarily enjoined the Trump administration on January 10, 2018, from continuing the phase-out of DACA, and ordered that it continue accepting applications for renewals, the impact of the decision is unclear. The government will quickly appeal the decision, the timeline for processing renewals is unclear, and no new applications from potential DACA beneficiaries will be permitted.

If the Trump administration’s termination of DACA is allowed to proceed, then each of the nearly 700,000 DACA recipients who are now working with valid work permits will—once those permits expire—become vulnerable to wage theft and other forms of exploitation. That hurts not just them, but it also diminishes the earnings and bargaining power of the U.S. citizens and authorized immigrants who work alongside them.

On September 5, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump administration would gradually “wind down” and end DACA, a Department of Homeland Security initiative from 2012 that temporarily deferred the deportation of approximately 800,000 young immigrants who were brought to the United States as children. DACA was implemented by the Obama administration after Congress failed to pass the Dream Act, a bill that would have shielded young immigrants brought here illegally by their parents from deportation and offered them a path to permanent residence and citizenship.

On average, DACA recipients saw their wages increase significantly after DACA was implemented; those who were 25 and older increased their average hourly wages by 84 percent. The vast majority—nearly 700,000—of those original DACA recipients are still enrolled in DACA and are employed via two-year work permits that recipients have been able to apply for and renew. DACA has been an unqualified success and has benefited not only the DACA recipients themselves, but also the country and the economy.

Prior to the January 10 injunction, it had been estimated that approximately 122 DACA recipients were losing their work authorization and protection from deportation every day—and that after March 5, 2018, the number losing protection would rapidly increase. Unless the January 10 injunction remains in effect and survives the forthcoming appeals, or Congress passes legislation to give DACA recipients a new immigration status, these workers will continue to be vulnerable. While President Trump has called on Congress to pass a bill to legalize “dreamers” and DACA recipients, he has made any legislation on DACA contingent on building a border wall and other immigration enforcement measures, making a bipartisan deal more difficult to achieve.

The end of DACA means nearly 700,000 young immigrants will become deportable as their protections expire. By losing the ability to work legally and contribute to the United States, DACA recipients will effectively be left without labor rights and employment law protections in the workplace. The United States is the only country many have DACA recipients have ever known since they were small children, which means they are unlikely to “self-deport” as the Trump administration would like them to do. When their permits expire, DACA recipients will be pushed into the informal labor market in order to survive, and as a result will earn lower wages and lose the ability to exercise their workplace rights. This loss of rights and wages en masse for so many workers will in turn degrade labor standards for the American workers employed alongside them.

## 5 Rolling back regulations that protect worker pay and safety

President Trump and congressional Republicans have blocked regulations that protect workers’ pay and safety. Two of the blocked regulations are the Workplace Injury and Illness recordkeeping rule, and the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces rule. By blocking these rules, the president and Congress are raising the risks for workers while rewarding companies that put their employees at risk.

On April 3, 2017, Trump signed a congressional resolution blocking the Workplace Injury and Illness recordkeeping rule, which clarifies an employer’s obligation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to maintain accurate records of workplace injuries and illnesses. Recordkeeping is about more than paperwork. If an employee is injured on the job (for example, is cut or burned, or suffers an amputation), contracts a job-related illness, or is killed in an accident on the job, then it is the employer’s duty to record the incident and work with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to investigate what happened. Failure to keep injury/illness records means that employers, OSHA, and workers cannot learn from past mistakes, and makes it harder to prevent the same tragedies from happening to others. By signing the resolution to block this rule, Trump gave employers a get-out-of-jail-free card when they fail to maintain or when they falsify—their injury/illness logs. Workers who could have been saved from preventable accidents on the job will have to pay the price with their health or even their lives.

On March 27, 2017, Trump signed a congressional resolution blocking the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces rule, which sought to ensure that government contracts are not going to companies with a record of violating workers’ rights or putting workers in danger. Under the rule, companies applying for federal contracts must disclose certain violations of federal labor laws and executive orders—specifically violations of laws and orders addressing wage and hour, safety and health, collective bargaining, family medical leave, and civil rights protections. By blocking the rule, Trump leaves civil servants who are awarding federal contracts with no effective system for distinguishing between law-abiding contractors and those that do not take worker protections seriously. Billions of taxpayers’ dollars have been awarded to companies that harm America’s working people by failing to pay minimum wages or overtime or violating other important labor and employment laws and regulations.

## 6 Stacking the Federal Reserve Board with candidates friendlier to Wall Street than to working families

The Trump administration inherited three vacancies on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors and got two more vacancies to fill when Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen and Vice Chair Stanley Fischer announced their resignations. President Trump’s actions so far—including his choice not to reappoint Yellen as chair, and his nomination of Randal Quarles to fill one of the inherited vacancies—suggest that he plans to tilt the board toward the interests of Wall Street rather than those of working families.

Actions taken by the Federal Reserve can either help raise living standards and reduce income inequality—or prolong wage stagnation and make our economy even more unequal. That is because the Fed largely sets interest rates for the economy and acts as the chief regulator of the nation’s big banks, with a Fed mandate to rein in risky Wall Street activities that have so many times hurt Main Street.

Higher interest rates are used to tamp down inflationary pressures, but when used too aggressively during times when inflation is not rising (as it is not right now), raising rates will throw people out of work and drive down wages. Outbreaks of unexpected inflation are particularly bad for wealth-holders while periods of too-high unemployment are particularly bad for low- and moderate-wage workers. In recent decades, the Fed has far too often yielded to the political preferences of wealth-holders and kept rates too high, hurting workers.

Trump’s first appointment to fill Fed vacancies was Quarles, who has consistently defended Wall Street against sensible regulation that would make it less crisis-prone, and has supported baseless criticisms of the Fed’s commitment to low interest rates during the recovery from the Great Recession. Trump also replaced Janet Yellen as the Federal Reserve chair. Yellen has been consistently supportive of monetary policy that targets low unemployment through low interest rates as well as of the Fed’s role as chief financial watchdog. She should have been reappointed as chair. Both she and Stanley Fischer have announced their resignations from the full board, giving Trump two more vacancies to fill. This means that the Trump administration will be able to fully pack the Fed’s Board of Governors with Quarles-like candidates, who will give Wall Street free rein while prematurely raising interest rates to slow the economic expansion just as it has finally begun to reach many working families.

## 7 Ensuring Wall Street can pocket more of workers’ retirement savings

The Trump administration’s repeated delays to a rule protecting retirement savers from “conflicted” investment advice will cost retirement savers an estimated $18.5 billion over the next 30 years in hidden fees and lost earning potential.

Since Trump took office, the Department of Labor has actively worked to weaken or rescind the “fiduciary” rule, which requires financial advisers to act in the best interests of their clients when giving retirement investment advice. The rule was finalized by the Department of Labor in April 2016 after an exhaustive economic analysis found that “adviser conflicts are inflicting large, avoidable losses on retirement investors, that appropriate, strong reforms are necessary, and that compliance with this final rule and exemptions can be expected to deliver large net gains to retirement investors.” The rule was supposed to go into effect in April 2017 but key provisions were delayed multiple times, with the most recent 18-month delay pushing back the ability to enforce the rule to July 1, 2019. EPI estimates that retirement savers who will get, or have already received, advice tainted by conflicts of interest during the delays will lose a total of $18.5 billion out of their retirement savings over the next 30 years.

The rule is being delayed with the clear intent of never fully implementing it. Instead, the Trump administration is buying time until it can permanently dismantle core elements, including the enforcement provisions that put teeth in the “best interest” requirements. The administration claims that it needs extra time to assess the rule’s effect on access to retirement investment advice—but the rule has already undergone a six-year vetting process on the likely impact of the rule, a process that incorporated feedback from four days of hearings, more than 100 stakeholder meetings, thousands of public comments, and a detailed review of the academic literature. According to the Consumer Federation of America, industry claims that the rule harms investors are based on “flimsy and biased evidence.”

## 8 Stacking the Supreme Court against workers by appointing Neil Gorsuch

On April 7, 2017, the Senate confirmed Trump’s nominee to the Supreme Court, Neil Gorsuch, who has a record of ruling against workers and siding with corporate interests. Now on the Supreme Court, Gorsuch may cast the deciding vote in significant cases challenging workers’ rights. Cases involving collective bargaining, forced arbitration and class action waivers in employment disputes, and joint-employer doctrines are already on the court’s docket this term or are likely to be considered by the court in coming years.

The Senate confirmed Gorsuch after refusing to consider President Obama’s nominee to the Supreme Court for an unprecedented 293 days. During his confirmation hearing, Gorsuch was questioned extensively about his dissent in the TransAm Trucking, Inc. v. Administrative Review Board case. The case involved a trucker who had been fired for leaving his stranded trailer to seek shelter in subzero temperatures. An administrative law judge, the Administrative Review Board, and the Tenth Circuit majority held that the driver had been unlawfully fired. Only Gorsuch dissented. In his dissent, Gorsuch described health and safety goals as “ephemeral and generic” and a worker having to wait in subzero temperatures with no access to heat while experiencing symptoms of hypothermia as merely “unpleasant.” This dissent indicates that Judge Gorsuch does not understand workers’ lives or the laws that protect them, and suggests a hostility to fundamental worker protections.

One of the most fundamental worker protection issues on the docket is the right of workers to form a union and negotiate wages and working conditions with employers. In February the court will hear arguments in Janus v. AFSCME, a case involving public-sector unions’ ability to collect “fair share” fees. Fair share fees are paid by workers who choose not to join their workplace’s union but who are still represented by the union, and benefit from union contract negotiations and have a union advocate working for them if they file a sexual harassment complaint or other grievance with their employer. Taking away public-sector unions’ ability to collect these fair share fees—while the unions are nonetheless required to provide services and representation to these workers—would threaten the unions’ very existence by weakening their financial stability. These unions have worked for decades to protect the rights of the teachers, nurses, firefighters, police officers, and other public service workers that communities depend on.

The very day the Supreme Court agreed to hear the Janus case, Gorsuch was the keynote speaker at an event sponsored in part by the Bradley Foundation. The Bradley Foundation has helped pay for the litigation expenses of the plaintiffs in Janus.

## 9 Trying to take affordable health care away from millions of working people

The Trump administration and congressional Republicans spent much of 2017 attempting to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). They finally succeeded in repealing a well-known provision of the ACA—the penalty for not buying health insurance—in the tax bill signed into law at the end of 2017. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the repeal of this provision will raise the number of uninsured Americans by 13 million in 2027.

The individual mandate aims to stop free-riding by healthy people that could threaten the efficiency of insurance markets (people not paying premiums when they’re healthy, only diving into insurance pools and paying premiums when they are sick). As an article in Time explains, “Many healthy people would voluntarily opt to go without coverage, and insurers could raise their premiums to cover the remaining, sicker population. These higher premiums would in turn cause more consumers to become priced out of the market.” While reports of massive coverage losses ultimately tanked congressional efforts to totally repeal the ACA last fall, the inclusion of the individual mandate repeal in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and the Trump administration’s cuts to ACA advertising and outreach signal a persistent desire to weaken or abolish the ACA.

It’s no surprise that the latest hit to the ACA will result in millions losing coverage. Congress spent the first half of 2017 trying to push through various versions of an ACA repeal bill called the American Health Care Act (AHCA). At every iteration, CBO analysis revealed the act would leave tens of millions without access to health care (with millions losing coverage even under a so-called skinny repeal that eliminated just a few key elements of the ACA). The AHCA would have also hurt those Americans who managed to retain health care coverage. It would have raised premiums and out-of-pocket costs, with out-of-pocket costs alone rising by $33 billion annually. And the AHCA would have slowed job growth significantly: working families’ spending would be curbed by the much higher out-of-pocket health expenses they face, which would lower demand for goods and services and thus slow job growth. See EPI’s interactive map showing how many jobs the AHCA could have cost each state.

## 10 Undercutting key worker protection agencies by nominating anti-worker leaders

Trump has appointed—or tried to appoint—individuals with records of exploiting workers to key posts in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). DOL is supposed to promote the welfare of job seekers, wage earners, and retirees by, among other things, protecting them from hazards on the job and ensuring they are paid for their work. The NLRB is charged with protecting the rights of most private-sector employees to join together, with or without a union, to improve their wages and working conditions. Nominees to critical roles at DOL and the NLRB have—in word and deed—expressed hostility to the worker rights laws they are in charge of upholding.

On January 20, 2017—his very first day in office—Trump failed workers when he nominated Andrew Puzder, then-CEO of CKE Restaurants (the parent company of Carl’s Jr. and Hardee’s), to be secretary of the Department of Labor. Puzder has opposed raising the minimum wage and the overtime salary threshold, criticized paid sick time proposals and health and safety regulations, and was CEO of a company with a record of violating worker protection laws and regulations. While his nomination was ultimately withdrawn due in great part to intense pressure from workers’ rights advocates, Trump’s original selection made a powerful statement—the president was prepared to support a labor nominee who is hostile to policies that would benefit the nation’s workers.

On September 2, 2017, Trump nominated Cheryl Stanton to serve as the administrator of the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division (WHD). In addition to enforcing fundamental minimum wage and overtime protections, WHD has a full host of responsibilities and enforcement authorities that include labor protections for workers in low-wage industries where workers are most vulnerable, such as agriculture. Stanton has spent much of her career representing employers, not workers, in cases alleging violations of workplace laws, including wage theft and discrimination. And Stanton was sued by a cleaning services provider who alleged that Stanton failed to pay for multiple housecleaning visits. Stanton has not been confirmed by the full Senate, but will likely be renominated by President Trump again this year.

The NLRB’s role is to protect workers’ rights under the National Labor Relations Act, deciding cases involving when and how workers can form a union and what types of activities employees can engage in to try to improve their working lives. Yet Trump has appointed leaders to the NLRB who have no record of supporting working people. On September 25, 2017, the Senate confirmed Trump nominee Rob Emanuel—an attorney at the Littler Mendelson law firm who had regularly represented large employers—to become a member of the NLRB. On November 8, 2017, the Senate confirmed Trump nominee Peter Robb as the general counsel to the NLRB. Robb has spent much of his career as a management-side labor and employment lawyer.

# A Historically Unpopular President Addresses the State of the Union

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

January 30, 2018

The New Yorker

Melania Trump, the First Lady of the United States, will view her husband’s State of the Union address this evening in the company of parents whose daughters were murdered by members of MS-13, the Salvadoran-American criminal gang. It seems a strange elevation in status for MS-13. If the state of the union in the most powerful and wealthiest nation on Earth is actually strong, what does a street gang have to do with anything? The choice gives some insight into the nature of the Trump era, one year in, with his party in unified control of government in Washington but **his Presidency historically unpopular**. During the State of the Union, the President gets to describe his agenda but also set the national scene. Trump is giving significance to an immigrant street gang. **He is in search of an enemy**.

There are plenty of ways to measure the difference between the Trump who took office and the one who now presides, but one is in the collapse of his ambition. At his Inaugural, a year ago, Trump was grandiose and dark in his rhetoric, taking as his theme a scene of “American carnage” that he insisted was sweeping the land. (“That was some weird shit,” President George W. Bush was reported to have said while sitting in the audience, as the speech ended.) The new President insisted that élites in Washington had strangled the nation (“Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed”); that globalization had threatened the country’s prosperity (“We’ve made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our own country has disappeared over the horizon”); and that his election would free the country from their grip. “Now,” the new President promised, “arrives the hour of action.”

Trump’s account was so ambitious that it seemed to envision his election as something much bigger than democratic politics—a sharp break with the past. “From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land,” the President said then. Part of the foreboding among Trump’s opponents that accompanied his Inauguration depended on the fear that Trump might be right—that a nativist political party might weave **protectionism, kleptocracy, and reactionary politics of gender and race in order to win majorities**. The atmosphere last winter around Trump and his chief strategist, Steve Bannon, was apprehensive. They represented a dark, racialized idea of the American future. They had also won the election. Perhaps they had seen something that the rest of us missed.

If they had, it looks faint now, and so does the imprint of the Trump revolution. Policy has never much interested Trump or his White House, and so the slogan “America First” has become something more abstract than an agenda—a way of talking, a chyron on Fox News. The Administration’s initial travel bans were **drafted so amateurishly** that judges across the country quickly ruled them unconstitutional. During its tortured effort to repeal Obamacare, the White House made few specific proposals and then blamed members of Congress for the debacle. The G.O.P. tax cut was drawn up by Republicans in Congress with little guidance from the White House. And during the recent debate over Dreamers the question of what policy, exactly, the President wanted **shifted so frequently** that it helped fuel a government shutdown. In these episodes of this very chaotic year, the idea that the President might augur some broader social tumult and change has faded; he has collapsed back into the factional world of Washington politics, and his preferences now match those of the institutional Republican Party, which he had started out denouncing.

The speech tonight, the President’s surrogates have said, will aim for a different tone—a bit brighter, its optimism leaning on the economy, now in its ninth year of a crawling, unspectacular recovery. Yesterday, recently returned from Davos, Trump was said to be editing and practicing the speech in the White House Map Room; today, his schedule is clear, too. But the meaningful matter, as it was at the Inauguration, is **not how the President talks but what he will do**.

Trump will reportedly detail his bargaining position on immigration (in which he would accede to permanent legal protections for the Dreamers in exchange for a dramatic expansion of funding for border security and sharp reductions in legal immigration) and unveil the infrastructure project that is meant to be his Administration’s major legislative ambition in 2018. Both of these are gestures at bipartisanship, but the details of his immigration position have made Democrats livid, and the meagre federal funding proposed for his infrastructure plan has left them cold.

The opposition has been winning elections, and the chance to argue with Trump is so enticing that the State of the Union will be followed by five separate Democratic addresses in opposition.

The President’s challenge is to unify the country when he has become a factional figure, with most of the population obviously unified against him. The mood around the President has been bitter this week. Trump, on the flight to Davos, was said to have raged about the ongoing investigation of his ties to Russia; just after he returned to the U.S., the news was that **Andrew McCabe, the F.B.I. deputy director, had been removed**, with the President telling him in the decisive phone call that he should ask his wife what it felt like to be a “political loser.”

By this morning, the political news was of more moderate Republicans in Congress who have chosen to retire rather than seek reëlection, and the President’s eldest son was retweeting conspiracy Web sites suggesting that an anti-Trump F.B.I. plot had been uncovered. A year ago, much of the country was tensely imagining what was possible if America’s government was unified behind an aspiring strongman. **Now it is measuring what it has to fear if the President is profoundly, perhaps fatally, weak**.

Benjamin Wallace-Wells began contributing to The New Yorker in 2006, and joined the magazine as a staff writer in 2015. He writes mainly about American politics and society.

# 67 Environmental Rules on the Way Out Under Trump

By NADJA POPOVICH, LIVIA ALBECK-RIPKA and KENDRA PIERRE-LOUIS UPDATED

Jan. 31, 2018

New York Times

Since taking office last year, President Trump has made eliminating federal regulations a priority. His administration — with help from Republicans in Congress — has often targeted environmental rules it sees as overly burdensome to the fossil fuel industry, including major Obama-era policies aimed at fighting climate change.

To date, the Trump administration has sought to reverse **more than 60 environmental rules**, according to a New York Times analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School’s Environmental Regulation Rollback Tracker, Columbia Law School’s Climate Tracker and other sources.

These reflect three types of policy changes: rules that have been officially reversed; announcements and changes still in progress, pending reviews and other rulemaking procedures; and regulations whose status is unclear because of delays or court actions. (Several rules were undone but later reinstated after legal challenges.)

**rules have been overturned**

Flood building standards, Proposed ban on a potentially harmful pesticide, Freeze on new coal leases on public lands, Methane reporting requirement, Anti-dumping rule for coal companies, Decision on Keystone XL pipeline, Decision on Dakota Access pipeline, Third-party settlement funds. Offshore drilling ban in the Atlantic and Arctic, Ban on seismic air gun testing in the Atlantic, Northern Bering Sea climate resilience plan, Royalty regulations for oil, gas and coal, Inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions in environmental reviews, Permit-issuing process for new infrastructure projects, Green Climate Fund contributions, Endangered species listings, Hunting ban on wolves and grizzly bears in Alaska, Protections for whales and sea turtles, Reusable water bottles rule for national parks, National parks climate order, Environmental mitigation for federal projects, Calculation for “social cost” of carbon, Planning rule for public lands, Copper filter cake listing as hazardous waste, Mine cleanup rule, Sewage treatment pollution regulations, Ban on use of lead ammunition on federal lands, Restrictions on fishing, Fracking regulations on public lands, Migratory bird protections, Department of Interior climate policies, Rule regulating industrial polluters, and Safety standards for “high hazard” trains.

**rollbacks are in progress**

Clean Power Plan, Paris climate agreement, Car and truck fuel-efficiency standards, Offshore oil and gas leasing, Status of 10 national monuments, Status of 12 marine areas, Limits on toxic discharge from power plants, Coal ash discharge regulations, Emissions standards for new, modified and reconstructed power plants, Emissions rules for power plant start-up and shutdown, Sage grouse habitat protections, Regulations on oil and gas drilling in some national parks, Oil rig safety regulations, Regulations for offshore oil and gas exploration by floating vessels, Drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, Hunting method regulations in Alaska, Requirement for tracking emissions on federal highways, Emissions standards for trailers and glider kits, Limits on methane emissions on public lands, Permitting process for air-polluting plants, Use of birds in subsistence handicrafts, Coal dust rule, Haze rule for national parks, and Review process for forest restoration projects.

**rollbacks are in limbo**

Wetland and tributary protections, Methane emission limits at new oil and gas wells, Limits on landfill emissions, Mercury emission limits for power plants, Hazardous chemical facility regulations, Groundwater protections for uranium mines, Efficiency standards for appliances, Efficiency standards for federal buildings, Rule helping consumers buy fuel-efficient tires, and Aircraft emissions standards.

The process of rolling back the regulations has not been smooth, in part because the administration has **tried to bypass the formal rulemaking process** in some cases. On more than one occasion, the administration has tried to roll back a rule by announcing its intent but skipping steps such as notifying the public and asking for comment. This has led to a new kind of legal challenge, according to Joseph Goffman, executive director of Harvard’s environmental law program. **Courts are now being asked to intervene to get agencies to follow the process.**

Regulations have often been reversed as a direct response to **petitions from oil, coal and gas** companies and other industry groups, which have enjoyed a much closer relationship with key figures in the Trump administration than under President Barack Obama.

Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, has frequently met with industry executives and lobbyists. (As Oklahoma’s attorney general, Mr. Pruitt sued the agency he now oversees more than a dozen times to try to block Obama-era rules.) The E.P.A. has been involved in nearly one-third of the policy reversals identified by The Times.

Here are the details for each policy targeted by the administration so far — including who lobbied to get the regulations changed. Are there rules we missed? Email climateteam@nytimes.com or tweet @nytclimate.

## OVERTURNED

1. Revoked Obama-era flood standards for federal infrastructure projects

This Obama-era rule, revoked by Mr. Trump last August, required that federal agencies protect new infrastructure projects by building to higher flood standards. Building trade groups and many Republican lawmakers opposed it as costly and burdensome.

2. Rejected a proposed ban on a potentially harmful pesticide

Dow AgroSciences, which sells the pesticide chlorpyrifos, opposed a risk analysis by the Obama-era E.P.A. that found the compound posed a risk to fetal brain and nervous system development. Mr. Pruitt rejected the E.P.A. analysis, reversing the Obama-era efforts to ban the compound, arguing that it needed further study. In December of 2017 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a biological opinion that chlorpyrifos — along with two other pesticides, Diazinon and Malathion — are harmful to endangered salmon.

3. Lifted a freeze on new coal leases on public lands

Coal companies weren't thrilled about the Obama administration's three-year freeze pending an environmental review. Mr. Zinke, the interior secretary, revoked the freeze and review in March of 2017. He appointed members to a new advisory committee on coal royalties in September.

4. Canceled a requirement for oil and gas companies to report methane emissions

In March of 2017, Republican officials from 11 states wrote a letter to Mr. Pruitt, saying the rule added costs and paperwork for oil and gas companies. The next day, Mr. Pruitt revoked the rule.

5. Revoked a rule that prevented coal companies from dumping mining debris into local streams

The coal industry said the rule was overly burdensome, calling it part of a “war on coal.” In February last year, Congress passed a bill revoking the rule, which Mr. Trump signed into law.

6. Approved the Keystone XL pipeline

Republicans, along with oil, gas and steel industry groups, opposed Mr. Obama's decision to block the pipeline, arguing that the project would create jobs and support North American energy independence. After the pipeline company reapplied for a permit, the Trump administration approved it. In November, state regulators in Nebraska, where the pipeline would pass through, approved the project but rejected the pipeline company’s proposed route.

7. Approved the Dakota Access pipeline

Republicans criticized Mr. Obama for delaying construction after protests led by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. Mr. Trump ordered an expedited review of the pipeline, and the Army approved it. Crude oil began flowing in June, but a federal judge later ordered a new environmental review. The pipeline can continue to operate, but its owners must develop a spill response plan with federal and tribal officials near Lake Oahe in North Dakota, enlist third-party auditors and produce bimonthly reports.

8. Prohibited funding third-party projects through federal lawsuit settlements, which could include environmental programs

Companies settling lawsuits with the federal government have sometimes paid for third-party projects, like when Volkswagen put $2.7 billion toward pollution-fighting programs after its emissions cheating scandal. The Justice Department has now prohibited such payments, which some conservatives have called “slush funds.”

9. Repealed a ban on offshore oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans

Lobbyists for the oil industry were opposed to Mr. Obama's use of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to permanently ban offshore drilling along parts of the Atlantic coast and much of the ocean around Alaska. Mr. Trump repealed the policy in an April 2017 executive order and instructed his interior secretary, Mr. Zinke, to review the locations made available for offshore drilling. In January the Trump administration opened nearly all United States coastal waters to offshore drilling.

10. Proposed the use of seismic air guns for gas and oil exploration in the Atlantic

Following a executive order in April last year known as the America-First Offshore Energy Strategy, the Trump administration began an application process to allow five oil and gas companies to survey the Atlantic using seismic air guns, which fire loud blasts that can harm whales, fish and turtles. The Obama administration had previously denied such permits.

11. Revoked a 2016 order protecting the northern Bering Sea region in Alaska

Mr. Trump revoked a 2016 order by Mr. Obama that was meant to protect the Bering Sea and Bering Strait by conserving biodiversity, engaging Alaska Native tribes and building a sustainable economy in the Arctic, which is vulnerable to climate change. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Republican of Alaska, has said she will work on new legislation that would reinstate the part of Mr. Obama’s order that required policies be vetted by the region’s tribes.

12. Repealed an Obama-era rule regulating royalties for oil, gas and coal

Lobbyists for the fossil fuel industry opposed 2016 Interior Department regulations meant to ensure fair royalties were paid to the government for oil, gas and coal extracted from federal or tribal land. In August of 2017, the Trump administration rescinded the rule, saying it caused “confusion and uncertainty” for energy companies.

13. Withdrew guidance for federal agencies to include greenhouse gas emissions in environmental reviews

Republicans in Congress opposed the guidelines, which advised federal agencies to account for possible climate effects in environmental impact reviews. They argued that the government lacked the authority to make such recommendations, and that the new rules would slow down the issuing of permits. Critics say that by eliminating the guidance, the administration is inviting lawsuits that could slow down permitting even more.

14. Relaxed the environmental review process for federal infrastructure projects

Oil and gas industry leaders said the permit-issuing process for new infrastructure projects was costly and cumbersome. In an August executive order, Mr. Trump announced a policy he said would streamline the process for pipelines, bridges, power lines and other federal projects. The order put a single federal agency in charge of navigating environmental reviews, instituted a 90-day timeline for permit authorization decisions and set a goal of completing the full process in two years.

15. Announced intent to stop payments to the Green Climate Fund

Mr. Trump said he would cancel payments to the fund, a United Nations program that helps developing countries reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Mr. Obama had pledged $3 billion, $1 billion of which Congress has already paid out over the opposition of some Republicans.

16. Removed a number of species from the endangered list

Arguing that they no longer warranted protection, the Trump administration removed a number of species from the endangered and threatened species lists, including the Yellowstone grizzly bear, which the Obama administration had also proposed removing. While Republicans had long pushed to have the bears removed, environmentalists said the population had not yet recovered.

17. Overturned a ban on the hunting of predators in Alaskan wildlife refuges

Alaskan politicians opposed the law, which prevented hunters from shooting wolves and grizzly bears on wildlife refuges, arguing that the state has authority over those lands. Congress passed a bill revoking the rule, which Mr. Trump signed into law.

18. Withdrew proposed limits on endangered marine mammals caught by fishing nets on the West Coast

Under Mr. Trump, the National Marine Fisheries Service withdrew the proposed rule, noting high costs to the fishing industry and arguing that sufficient protections were already in place.

19. Stopped discouraging the sale of plastic water bottles in national parks

The National Park Service had urged parks to reduce or eliminate the sale of disposable plastic water bottles in favor of filling stations and reusable bottles. The International Bottled Water Association called the action unjustified.

20. Rescinded an Obama-era order to consider climate change in managing natural resources in national parks

The 2016 policy, which called for scientific park management, among other objectives, was contested by Republicans. In August, the National Park Service said it rescinded the policy to eliminate confusion among the public and National Park Service employees regarding the Trump administration’s “new vision” for America’s parks.

21. Revoked directive for federal agencies to mitigate the environmental impacts of projects they approve

In a March 2017 executive order, Mr. Trump revoked an Obama-era memorandum that instructed five federal agencies to “avoid and then minimize” the impacts of development on water, wildlife, land and other natural resources. The memo also encouraged private investment in restoration projects.

22. Directed agencies to stop using an Obama-era calculation of the “social cost of carbon”

As part of an expansive March 2017 executive order, Mr. Trump directed agencies to stop using an Obama-era calculation that helped rulemakers monetize the costs of carbon emissions and instead base their estimates on a 2003 cost-benefit analysis. Despite the federal rollback, several states, including New York and Minnesota, are using the Obama-era metric to help reduce emissions from their energy grids.

23. Revoked an update to the Bureau of Land Management's public land use planning process

Republicans and fossil fuel industry groups opposed the updated planning rule for public lands, arguing that it gave the federal government too much power at the expense of local and business interests. Congress passed a bill revoking the rule, which Mr. Trump signed into law.

24. Removed copper filter cake, an electronics manufacturing byproduct, from the “hazardous waste” list

Samsung petitioned the E.P.A. to delist the waste product, which is produced during electroplating at its Texas semiconductor facility. The E.P.A. granted the petition after a public comment period.

25. Reversed a proposed rule that mines prove they can pay for cleanup

Mining groups and Western-state Republicans opposed an Obama-era proposal that mining companies prove they have the money to clean up pollution left behind at their sites. Abandoned mines have left waterways polluted in many parts of the country. In December, the Trump administration rejected the proposed rule, saying it would impose an undue burden on rural America and on an important sector of the economy.

26. Withdrew a proposed rule reducing pollutants at sewage treatment plants

In December 2016, the E.P.A. proposed a rule requiring sewage treatment plants to further regulate emissions, which can include hazardous air pollutants, including formaldehyde, toluene and tetrachloroethylene.

27. Overturned ban on use of lead ammunition on federal lands

Mr. Zinke overturned the Obama-era order, which banned the use of lead ammunition and fish tackle on lands and waters managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, citing lack of “significant communication, consultation or coordination with affected stakeholders.”

28. Amended fishing regulations for a number of species

After a push by commercial fishing groups, the Trump administration began to roll back regulations on catch limits and season openings for various species of fish, including gray triggerfish, while proposing to review rules for others.

29. Announced plans to rescind water pollution regulations for fracking on federal and Indian lands

Energy companies petitioned the Bureau of Land Management to rescind the rule, which was proposed by Mr. Obama in 2015 but never enforced because of legal challenges. In July, the bureau announced plans to revoke the rule, citing Mr. Trump's "prioritization of domestic energy production." At the end of December, the rule was officially rescinded. This year, conservation and tribal groups along with the state of California sued to block the repeal.

30. Rolled back an Obama-era policy aimed at protecting migratory birds

In December, Mr. Trump's administration reversed a statement that energy companies might face prosecution for accidentally killing birds while operating their facilities.

31. Rolled back the Department of Interior's climate and mitigation policies

Following a March 2017 executive order, the Department of the Interior rescinded Obama-era climate and mitigation policies and directed the Bureau of Land Management to review its mitigation strategies for the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

32. Overturned a Clinton-era rule designed to regulate industrial polluters

In January 2018, the E.P.A. issued new guidance overturning a Clinton-era regulation designed to regulate industrial polluters. Under the old rules factories and other facilities that released airborne pollutants above a set threshold were required to install technologies that reduced pollution to the maximum level achievable. They were also required to maintain these technological controls even if they dropped below the threshold level. The new rules overturn the requirement to maintain these controls.

33. Reversed an Obama-era rule that required braking system upgrades for trains carrying oil and ethanol

In December, the Department of Transportation said it could no longer justify Obama-era rules that required improved braking systems on “high hazard” trains hauling flamabale liquids. The rules were designed to help prevent accidents like the 2013 train derilment in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, that killed 47 people. That train, carrying crude oil, derailed in Lac-Mégantic's downtown, where it caught fire and exploded. The rule had been opposed by the railroad and oil industries as costly and unnecessary.

## IN PROGRESS

34. Proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan

Coal companies and Republican officials in many states opposed the plan, which set limits on carbon emissions from existing coal- and gas-fired power plants. Mr. Trump issued an executive order in March last year instructing the E.P.A. to re-evaluate the plan, which had not taken effect. In October, the E.P.A. proposed repealing the plan without a replacement. In December, however, the department published a notice proposing a rule that would replace the plan . The comment period for the replacement proposal was slated to end in February, but has been extended through April 26th.

35. Announced intent to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement

Arguing that it tied his hands in matters of domestic energy policy, Mr. Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the Paris accord, under which the United States had pledged to cut emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. The Trump administration has formally notified the United Nations of its intent to withdraw, but it cannot complete the process until late 2020. The United States is the only country in the world opposed to the agreement.

36. Reopened a review of fuel-efficiency standards for cars and trucks

Automakers said it would be difficult and costly to meet fuel economy goals they had agreed upon with the Obama administration. Under Mr. Trump, the E.P.A. and Department of Transportation have reopened a standards review for model years 2021 through 2025. The administration is also considering easing penalties on automakers who do not comply with the federal standards.

37. Proposed reopening nearly all U.S. waters for oil and gas drilling

The fossil fuel industry and Republican lawmakers pushed Mr. Zinke to revise a five-year offshore oil and gas leasing plan finalized by the Obama administration. The Obama-era plan put 94 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf off limits to drilling. Mr. Zinke's initial plan would open up over 90 percent of the area, but several states are now seeking exemptions.

38. Recommended shrinking or modifying 10 national monuments

Republicans in Congress said the Antiquities Act, which allows presidents to designate national monuments, had been abused by previous administrations. Mr. Obama used the law to protect more than 4 million acres of land and several million square miles of ocean. Mr. Trump ordered a review of recent monuments, culminating in proclamations that shrank two Utah sites, reducing Bears Ears National Monument by 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante almost by half. At least five lawsuits are challenging the modifications.

39. Reviewing 12 marine protected areas

As part of his April executive order aimed at expanding offshore oil and gas drilling, Mr. Trump called for a review of national marine sanctuaries and monuments designated or expanded within the past decade. In June, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that 12 protected marine areas were under review. In his recommendation to the president, Mr. Zinke, the interior secretary, called for introducing commercial fishing in three protected marine areas: Rose Atoll, in the South Pacific; Pacific Remote Islands, to the south and west of Hawaii; and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts, off the coast of New England.

40. Reviewing limits on toxic discharge from power plants into public waterways

Utility and fossil fuel industry groups opposed the rule, which limited the amount of toxic metals — arsenic, lead and mercury, among others — power plants could release into public waterways. Industry representatives said complying with the guidelines, which were to take effect in 2018, would be extremely expensive. In September, Mr. Pruitt postponed the rule until 2020.

41. Reviewing rules regulating coal ash waste from power plants

Utility industry groups petitioned to change the rule, which regulates how power plants dispose of coal ash in waste pits that are often located near waterways. In December, the E.P.A. proposed technical changes to the rule, as well as alternative performance standards. In January, the EPA accepted an application from Oklahoma seeking state regulatory coal over its coal ash instead of E.P.A. control.

42. Reviewing emissions standards for new, modified and reconstructed power plants

In addition to the Clean Power Plan, Mr. Trump's Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence called on the E.P.A. to review a related rule limiting carbon dioxide emissions from new, modified and reconstructed power plants.

43. Reviewing emissions rules for power plant start-ups, shutdowns and malfunctions

Power companies and other industry groups sued the Obama administration over the rule, which asked 36 states to tighten emissions exemptions for power plants and other facilities. The E.P.A. under Mr. Trump asked the court to suspend the case while the rule undergoes review.

44. Announced plans to review greater sage grouse habitat protections

Oil and gas industry leaders criticized the Obama administration's plan, developed in coordination with thousands of stakeholders, for protecting the bird, whose numbers have plummeted in recent years. In July, the Bureau of Land Management issued recommendations that gave states greater latitude than the original plan. In December, The B.L.M. ended Obama-era rules that prioritized putting oil and gas drilling projects and grazing habitats outside of sage grouse habitat. The policy shifts led to an increase in federal leasing in sage grouse habitat in Wyoming at the end of 2017. In the first quarter of 2018, the agency is expected to offer seven times more sage grouse habitat for leasing in Wyoming compared to the same quarter in 2017.

45. Ordered review of regulations on oil and gas drilling in national parks where mineral rights are privately owned

Mr. Trump’s March executive order called for a review of Obama-era updates to a 50-year-old rule regulating oil and gas drilling in national parks with shared ownership. (Most national parks are owned solely by the government, and drilling in them is banned. In some parks, though, the government owns the surface but the mineral rights are privately held.)

46. Reviewing new safety regulations on offshore drilling

The American Petroleum Institute and other trade groups wrote to the Trump administration, raising concerns over oil rig safety regulations implemented after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. In August, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement confirmed it was moving forward with the review. Mr. Trump had ordered a review of the rules earlier in the year.

47. Ordered a review of a rule regulating offshore oil and gas exploration by floating vessels in the Arctic

As part of the expansive executive order on offshore drilling, Mr. Trump called for an immediate review of a rule intended to strengthen safety and environmental standards for exploratory drilling in the Arctic. The rule, a response to the 2013 Kulluk accident in the Gulf of Alaska, increased oversight of floating vessels and other mobile offshore drilling units.

48. Proposed ending a restriction on exploratory drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Republicans have long sought to to open the Alaska refuge to gas and oil drilling. In August, an Interior Department internal memo proposed lifting restrictions on exploratory seismic studies in the region, which is home to polar bears, caribou and other Arctic animals. In December, Republicans in Congress lifted the decades-old ban on drilling in the refuge as part of a sweeping tax bill. President Trump signed the bill into law on Dec. 22.

49. Ordered a review of federal regulations on hunting methods in Alaska

Obama-era rules prohibited certain hunting methods in Alaska’s national preserves. They overruled state law, which had allowed hunters to bait bears with food, shoot caribou from boats and kill bear cubs with their mothers present. Alaska sued the Interior Department, claiming that the regulations affected traditional harvesting. The Trump administration ordered a review.

50. Proposed repeal of a requirement for reporting emissions on federal highways

Transportation and infrastructure industry groups opposed a measure that required state and local officials to track greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles on federally funded highways. The rule took effect in September, after the Trump administration's attempts to postpone it were challenged in court. But the administration formally proposed reversing the rule the next week.

51. Proposed a repeal of emissions standards for trailers and glider kits

Stakeholders in the transportation industry opposed the Obama-era rule, which for the first time applied emissions standards to trailers and glider vehicles. They argued that the E.P.A. lacked the authority to regulate them, because their products are not motorized. In November, the E.P.A. proposed repealing the standards.

52. Suspended rule limiting methane emissions on public lands

The oil and gas industry opposed the rule, which required companies to control methane emissions on federal or tribal land. The House voted this year to revoke the rule, but the Senate rejected the measure, 51 to 49. In December, after a series of legal challenges, the Bureau of Land Management published a notice in the Federal Register delaying the requirements for a year. A coalition of environmental groups has sued the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior over the delay.

53. Announced plans to review permitting programs for air-polluting plants

In an October memorandum, Mr. Pruitt announced that a panel would be established to reconsider a permitting process for building new facilities like power plants that pollute the air. “The potential costs, complexity, and delays that may arise” from the permitting process, Mr. Pruitt wrote, could “slow the construction of domestic energy exploration, production or transmission facilities.”

54. Overturned a ban on using parts of migratory birds in handicrafts made in Alaska

The Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council — which includes federal, state and Alaska Native representation — recommended changes to the rule, which banned making handicrafts in Alaska from inedible parts of migratory birds that were hunted for food.

55. Announced a review of coal dust limits in mines

An Obama administration rule was intended to lower miners’ exposure to coal dust in an attempt to reduce the incidence of black lung disease. The Labor Department’s Mine Safety and Health Administration announced in December that it would seek a study of the Obama-era requirements, which the mining industry opposes.

56. Announced rewriting of rule meant to reduce haze in national parks

The E.P.A. announced a planned rewrite of an Obama-era update to regional haze regulations aimed at reducing air pollution in national parks and wilderness areas by 2064. EPA administrator Scott Pruitt noted that “some or all of the issues” raised by industry groups and conservatives – including costs and other regulatory burdens – would be considered. The haze program, which requires older coal-fired power plants and other sites to implement more stringent pollution controls, had been a source of conflict between state and federal authorities under Mr. Obama. Since Mr. Trump took office last year, the E.P.A. has loosened or delayed implementation of regional haze plans in several states, including Arkansas, Texas and Utah.

57. Announced plans to revise environmental review process for forest “restoration” projects

After complaints from Congress and the timber industry, a January memo from the Department of Agriculture announced plans to review procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act, “with the goal of increasing efficiency of environmental analysis” when it comes to approval of forest restoration or thinning projects.

## IN LIMBO

58. Proposed rescinding a rule that protected tributaries and wetlands under the Clean Water Act

Farmers, real estate developers, golf course owners and many Republican politicians opposed an Obama-era clarification of the Clean Water Act, called the Waters of the United States rule, that extended protections to small waterways. Under Mr. Trump's direction, Mr. Pruitt issued a proposal in June to roll back the expanded definition. In November, the E.P.A. proposed delaying the effective date of the rule to 2020 from 2018. In January, the Supreme Court ruled that challenges to the rule must be heard in district courts rather than in appeals courts. The justices' decision left the status of the rule uncertain.

59. Reviewing a rule limiting methane emissions at new oil and gas drilling sites

Lobbyists for the oil and gas industries petitioned Mr. Pruitt to reconsider a rule limiting emissions of methane and other pollutants from new and modified oil and gas wells. A federal appeals court has ruled that the E.P.A. must enforce the Obama-era regulation while it rewrites the rule. The E.P.A. said it may do so on a “case by case” basis.

60. Put on hold rules aimed at cutting methane emissions from landfills

Waste industry groups objected to this Obama-era regulation, which required landfills to set up methane gas collection systems and monitor emissions. In May, the E.P.A. suspended enforcement of the new standards for 90 days, pending a review. The delay period has since passed, meaning the rule is in effect util the administration reviews and replaces the rule.

61. Delayed a lawsuit over a rule regulating airborne mercury emissions from power plants

Coal companies, along with Republican officials in several states, sued over this Obama-era rule, which regulates the amount of mercury and other pollutants that fossil fuel power plants can emit. They argued that the rule helped shutter coal plants, many of which were already compliant. Oral arguments in the case have been delayed while the E.P.A. reviews the rule.

62. Delayed a rule aiming to improve safety at facilities that use hazardous chemicals

Chemical, agricultural and power industry groups said that the rule, a response to a 2013 explosion at a fertilizer plant that killed 15 people, did not increase safety. Mr. Pruitt delayed the standards until 2019, pending a review. Eleven states are now suing over the delay.

63. Continuing review of proposed groundwater protections for certain uranium mines

Republicans in Congress came out against a 2015 rule which regulated byproduct materials from a type of uranium mining. They said the E.P.A. had not conducted an adequate cost-benefit analysis of the rule. The Obama administration submitted a revised proposal one day before Mr. Trump was sworn into office. The Trump administration must now decide the fate of the rule.

64. Delayed publishing efficiency standards for household appliances

A number of states and environmental groups sued the Trump administration for failing to publish efficiency standards for appliances like heaters, air conditioners and refrigerators. In one case, the administration reversed course and published efficiency standards for ceiling fans. Other standards are still being contested in court.

65. Delayed compliance dates for federal building efficiency standards

Republicans in Congress opposed the rules, which set efficiency standards for the design and construction of new federal buildings. The Trump administration delayed compliance until Sept. 30, but it is unclear whether the rules are now in effect.

66. Withdrew a rule that would help consumers buy more fuel-efficient tires

The rule required tire manufacturers and retailers to provide consumers with information about replacement car tires. The tire industry opposed several aspects of the rule, but had been working with the government to refine it. The Trump administration withdrew the proposed rule in January but has not said whether it may be reinstated.

67. Halted rulemaking on limiting greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft

Aircraft account for 3 percent of the United States' total greenhouse gas emissions, but in 2017, the E.P.A. changed the status of a proposed rule limiting aircraft emissions to “inactive” on the agency's website.

## Some other rules were reinstated after legal challenges

Environmental groups have sued the Trump administration over many of the proposed rollbacks, and, in some cases, have succeeded in reinstating environmental rules.

1. Suspended effort to lift restrictions on mining in Bristol Bay, Alaska

A Canadian company sued the E.P.A. over an Obama-era plan to restrict mining in Bristol Bay, an important salmon fishery. The Trump administration settled the suit and allowed the company to apply for permits to build a large gold and copper mine in the area. Alaska Republicans, including Senator Murkowski, supported the mine. Commercial fishermen and Governor Bill Walker of Alaska, an independent, opposed it. In January, the E.P.A. announced that it was reversing course and suspending its effort to withdraw the Obama-era restrictions on mining in the area. Instead, the agency will keep those restrictions in place while it learns more about the risk the mine, if built, would pose to the region’s fisheries and resources.

2. Delayed by one year a compliance deadline for new ozone pollution standards, but later reversed course

Mr. Pruitt initially delayed the compliance deadline for a 2015 national ozone standard, but reversed course after 15 states and the District of Columbia sued. In November, the E.P.A. certified those areas as being in compliance with the rule but refused to say which areas violated it. In December — after public health and environmental groups, 14 states and the District of Columbia sued the E.P.A. — a court ordered the agency to file a report on the remaining areas. In January, the E.P.A. further delayed its announcement untill April.

3. Reinstated rule limiting the discharge of mercury by dental offices into municipal sewers

The E.P.A. reinstated an Obama-era rule that regulated the disposal of dental amalgam, a filling material that contains mercury and other toxic metals. The agency initially put the rule on hold as part of a broad regulatory freeze, but environmental groups sued. The American Dental Association came out in support of the rule.

Note: This list does not include new rules proposed by the Trump administration that do not roll back previous policies, nor does it include court actions that have affected environmental policies independent of executive or legislative action.

Sources: Harvard Law School’s Environmental Regulation Rollback Tracker; Columbia Law School’s Climate Deregulation Tracker; Brookings Institution; Federal Register; Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; White House.

Additional reporting by Tatiana Schlossberg.

# Brief government shutdown ends as Trump signs spending bill

Congress votes to reopen the government

February 9, 2018

Washington Post

By Mike DeBonis and Erica Werner February 9

President Trump ended the second government shutdown of his tenure early Friday morning, signing a sweeping spending bill hours after Congress backed the bipartisan budget deal that stands to **add hundreds of billions of dollars in federal spending on the military, domestic programs and disaster relief.**

**The 240-to-186 House vote gaveled to a close just after 5:30 a.m., nearly four hours after the Senate cleared the legislation on a vote of 71 to 28, with wide bipartisan support.**

But action did not come soon enough to avoid a brief government shutdown — the second in three weeks — thanks to a one-man protest from Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who delayed the Senate vote past midnight to mark his opposition to an estimated $320 billion addition to the federal budget deficit.

Trump tweeted that he signed the bill, officially ending the brief shutdown. “Just signed Bill,” he wrote. “Our Military will now be stronger than ever before. We love and need our Military and gave them everything — and more. First time this has happened in a long time. Also means JOBS, JOBS, JOBS!”

The shutdown was so unanticipated that the Office of Management and Budget didn’t tell federal agencies to prepare for it until Thursday evening. The closure is likely to end up being brief and having only a slight impact on federal workers and the public.

The bill would reopen the government while **showering hundreds of billions of dollars on defense and domestic priorities, speeding disaster aid to hurricane-hit regions, and lifting the federal borrowing limit for a year.** While the legislation sets out broad budget numbers for the next two fiscal years, lawmakers face yet another deadline on March 23 — giving congressional appropriators time to write a detailed bill doling out funding to government agencies.

Still, lawmakers’ inability to keep open the government underpinning the world’s largest economy pointed to acute legislative dysfunction that has paralyzed Congress and forced the government to operate on one short-term spending bill after another since the fiscal year began Oct. 1. Last month, the government shut down for three days in a dispute over undocumented immigrants brought to the country as kids, reopening when Senate Democrats accepted assurances from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) that he would hold a floor debate on immigration this month.

The budget deal passed Friday was meant to break the cycle of budget dysfunction — before it, too, ran into dysfunction. Earlier in the week, the spending deal appeared primed for easy passage as McConnell and Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) unveiled it jointly on the Senate floor with a bipartisan flourish and mutual praise. But it began to run into trouble Thursday, as House conservatives rebelled over excessive deficit spending and House liberals fumed that this bill, too, failed to protect “dreamers” — undocumented immigrants brought to the country as children who face losing work permits granted by President Barack Obama under the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals** program (DACA) but rescinded by Trump.

Then, as an expected vote approached in the Senate, Paul began to throw up roadblocks, demanding a vote on his amendment that would demonstrate how the two-year budget deal breaks past pledges to rein in federal spending. GOP leaders refused to allow him to offer the amendment, arguing that if Paul got an amendment vote, many other senators might want one, too. Paul, in turn, refused to allow the vote to go forward, making use of Senate rules that allow individual senators to slow down proceedings that require the consent of all. “I can’t in all good honesty, in all good faith, just look the other way because my party is now complicit in the deficits,” Paul said on the Senate floor as evening pushed into night.

Meanwhile, potentially bigger problems surfaced in the House, where liberals led by Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.) were incensed that the plight of young undocumented immigrants who face the threat of deportation was not addressed in the spending bill. Pelosi announced she would vote against the bill. And despite initially suggesting that she would not be urging fellow Democrats to follow her lead, she increasingly appeared to be doing exactly that. At a closed-door evening meeting of House Democrats, Pelosi told lawmakers to “use our leverage,” according to one House Democrat in the room, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose the private conversation. “We have a moment,” she said. “They don’t have the votes.”

Pelosi is under intense pressure from immigration activists and liberals in her caucus to take a stand for the dreamers because they face losing deportation protections under the Trump administration. Supporters of these immigrants have watched in growing outrage as Democrats have failed repeatedly to achieve results for the cause. They want Democrats to block must-pass bills until action is taken to protect dreamers, even after last month’s shutdown failed to achieve anything more than a commitment from McConnell to debate the issue on the Senate floor.

Rep. Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-Ill.) said his colleagues faced risks if they voted for the bill — in his words, “to deport dreamers.” “You all know that on the progressive side of the Democratic Party, this is not going away,” said Gutierrez.

Several House Democrats emerged from the Thursday-night caucus meeting resolved to hold the line. “I think there’s a very strong sentiment that this is a moment that we can’t let pass,” Rep. Daniel Kildee (D-Mich.) said. “We’ve allowed these moments to pass in the past. This is a moment we can’t let pass without doing everything we can to move forward on DACA.”

But others were unconvinced. Some were skittish over another shutdown, especially with Senate Democrats largely on board with the spending deal, and others simply thought the budget deal was too good to pass up. Rep. Terri A. Sewell (D-Ala.) cited a pair of federal health programs that were extended as part of the deal, while Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-Va.) said he simply thought an extended shutdown would be counterproductive. “I believe harm would have flowed toward dreamers had the government shut down,” he said. “What we saw last time was that public support actually fell. And it’s an awfully hard intellectual contortion to argue against a bill where we won pretty much every battle.”

**Seventy-three House Democrats voted for the bill, while 119 voted against it. Among Republicans, 167 supported it and 67 voted no.**

Republican leaders, who have typically emerged from spending battles facing questions about divisions in their own party, were more than pleased to observe the Democratic split.

“They had a bad strategy when they came up with this idea in December, and they have been fractured ever since,” said Rep. Patrick T. McHenry (R-N.C.), the GOP’s chief deputy whip. “To me, it’s a fascinating display of a bipartisan win and at the same time, Democrats ripping themselves apart about a bipartisan agreement. It doesn’t make any damn sense.”

But the spectacle in the Senate, prompted entirely by Paul, tempered any Republican glee. Hours before the shutdown took effect, a visibly irritated McConnell tried to move to a vote, but Paul objected. Then Paul launched into a lengthy floor speech deriding bipartisan complicity on deficit spending while the country goes “on and on and on, finding new wars to fight that make no sense.” The senator direly predicted a “day of reckoning,” possibly in the form of the collapse of the stock market. As the hours ticked on, Paul repeatedly refused to consent to allowing the vote to happen, as lawmakers and aides of both parties grew increasingly annoyed at him.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.), leaving the floor after an unsuccessful attempt to curtail Paul’s standoff, called the gambit “grossly irresponsible” and said that leaders would not entertain his demand for a vote. “Why reward bad behavior?” Cornyn said.

[Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) noted the deal would deliver more military funding than Trump requested in his 2018 budget proposal. “I’m all for supporting our military, and I want to make sure they’re funded properly,” he said. “It’s very difficult to have that big of an increase in one year and then be able to use it wisely.” The budget agreement would increase what’s called discretionary spending — areas such as scientific research, education, roads and health care that are funded year to year through congressional appropriations — by 21 percent over existing budget caps. Some of the funding is reserved for programs favored by lawmakers of both parties: research conducted by the National Institutes of Health, for instance, as well as transportation and water infrastructure. Also included are extensions of tax breaks that could add billions of dollars more to the cost of the bill.

The **Children’s Health Insurance Program** would be extended through 2028, and the federal fund for **community health centers** would see a two-year extension. The bill also **abolishes the Independent Payment Advisory Board**, a body established in the 2010 Affordable Care Act with the power to reduce the payments Medicare makes to health providers.]

Senate leaders remained confident all along that the spending deal would pass easily in the end, and it did. But without an agreement among all senators on timing, the voting was delayed until 1 a.m., when the time allotted for debate expired. By then, the government had been shut down for an hour.

Senators of both parties were left fuming, with most of their ire directed toward Paul. “He has mastered the art of ticking off his colleagues,” said Sen. Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.). “It’s a colossal waste of everybody’s time,” said Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.). Of Paul, Thune said, “He never gets a result.” Paul himself made no apologies as he delivered one floor speech after another, casting himself as a lone defender of fiscal austerity, despite having voted in December for a tax bill that added at least $1 trillion to the debt.

House conservatives also objected to the **enormous increase in federal spending,** most of which would be piled onto the deficit with minimal attempts to offset it. But they were outweighed by Republicans eager to deliver the **Pentagon funding** that Trump had long demanded. House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) highlighted the military funding boost Thursday ahead of the vote and predicted the bill would pass on a bipartisan basis. “There is widespread agreement in both parties that we have cut the military too much, that our service members are suffering as a result, and that we need to do better,” he said.

The bill’s impact ranges far beyond the military — renewing several large health-care programs, suspending the national debt limit for a year and extending billions of dollars of expiring tax breaks. The cost of those provisions exceeds **$560 billion**, though lawmakers included some revenue-raising offsets.

In comparison, the 2009 fiscal stimulus bill passed at the bottom of a global recession under Obama was estimated to cost $787 billion over 10 years. Republicans were nearly unanimous in opposing that measure in their clamor for fiscal restraint in the face of growing deficits — demands largely drowned out now in the Trump era. This spending bill, proposed amid an economic boom, could be the last major piece of legislation passed before November’s midterm elections, barring a breakthrough on the thorny immigration debate.

Under the deal, existing spending limits would be raised by a combined $296 billion through 2019. The caps were put in place in 2011 after a fiscal showdown between Obama and GOP congressional leaders who demanded spending austerity.

The agreement includes an **additional $160 billion in uncapped funding for overseas military and State Department operations,** continuing a costly line item that dates back to the immediate response to the 2001 terrorist attacks. And about $90 billion more would be spent on disaster aid for victims of recent hurricanes and wildfires. Tax provisions would add another $17 billion to the cost of the bill.

The spending is partially offset through an increase in customs and immigration fees, as well as sales from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and other accounting maneuvers. Still, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, the package is set to add $320 billion to the budget deficit over the coming decade.

David Weigel, Ed O’Keefe, Damian Paletta and Sean Sullivan contributed to this report.

# STATE OF THE RESISTANCE

The New Yorker

Jelani Cook

February 19, 2018

Under normal circumstances, referring to the address that the President delivers each January as the "State of the Union" is a familiar bit of hyperbole. It is more aptly thought of as a summary of the year that was—not unlike the countless news and pop-culture roundups that appear at New Year's—and as a projection of the Administration's priorities for the upcoming year. The President gives a pro-forma statement that "the state of our union is strong," because what else would it be? But these are not normal circumstances.

Trump's statement regarding the strength of the Union in last week's address carried about the same credibility as his denial that he cheated on his postpartum wife with a porn star, or his claim that Mexico would pay for his quixotic border wall. Americans, by a nearly two-to-one margin, believe that Trump has further divided the country. Superficially, his speech conformed to the conventional structure of a State of the Union address. But, at the very moment that the President was attesting to the Union's durability, his Administration and its Republican abettors were actively engaged in a feud with the F.B.I., attempting to discredit the special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and to release a secret memo about that investigation, despite objections from senior officials in the Department of Justice. In a new book, "How Democracies Die," Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt argue that democracy does not typically succumb

during a catastrophic event, such as a seizure of power by a military junta. It fails more commonly through the gradual weakening of crucial institutions, such as the judiciary and the press. In short, the Union is precisely as strong as its in-situations, and those institutions are being assailed in ways that we've seldom seen.

It is for this reason that, since the inception of Trump's Presidency, the members of his opposition have tended to understand themselves not simply as defenders of particular policy positions but also as stalwarts of democracy itself—a resistance. As such, the Trump Resistance has differed from, for instance, the Tea Party in keyways. The latter was intent upon "taking the country back"; the former hopes to insure that the country remains standing. Yet it has been in particulars of policy that Trump's impact on women, immigrants, and minorities—the groups most antagonized by him during the 2016 campaign—can be seen.

The President who has been accused of sexual harassment or assault by at least nineteen women has also overseen a re-vision of the Department of Education's guidelines on sexual assault on college campuses that raises the standard of proof for accusers. He has made it easier for employers to refuse to include birth control in their health-care plans and reinstated the "global gag rule" on abortion counselling. He created an "election integrity" commission that was a thinly veiled attempt to nationalize voter-suppression techniques. He has rescinded deportation protections granted to two hundred thousand Salvadoreans and almost sixty thousand Haitians, and tried to remove transgender people from the military and to ban people in certain majority-Muslim countries from travelling here. His Justice Department has issued new guidance that could lead to more prosecutions for marijuana-related crimes, which will disproportionately affect African-Americans, who are far more likely to be arrested on such charges.

Lest this litany seem too sunny, in January the Doomsday Clock, which measures the likelihood of human an-nihilation, moved closer to midnight than it has been since the nineteen-fifties. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which sets the dock, called out Donald Trump specifically for his inflammatory rhetoric on North Korea, the Iran deal, climate change, and nuclear weapons.

Given this record, the pronouncements of the Commander-in-Chief were hardly an accurate depiction of our Union. Last year, the Washington Post noted, Trump's actions prompted some eight thousand seven hundred protests across the country. The A. C.L.U., which greeted the incoming Administration by saying, "We'll See You in Court," has sued the Administration over DACA, the rescission of Obama-era guidelines concerning the use of drones, the travel ban, the case of an undocumented teen who was refused access to an abortion, and that of a ten-year-old girl with cerebral palsy, who was detained at the border rather than being allowed to return to her family. (The A.C.L.U. of Virginia also sued for the right of alt-right protesters to gather in a Charlottesville park—a decision that had disastrous consequences when, predictably, they resorted to violence against counter-demonstrators.) The N.A.A.C.P. has challenged Trump's ruling on Haitians; sued the Department of Homeland Security, arguing that Trump's "shithole" comment reflected intentional discrimination in immigration policy; and fought the election-integrity commission, which, stymied by its lack of progress, was dis-banded last month.

There is also a direct line connecting Trump's election with the many women's marches that have taken place across the country and with the #MeToo movement that emerged last fall. The cultural tide that saw the resignations of elected officials that included Senator Al Franken and Representatives John Conyers and Trent Franks was, on many levels, a backlash against the conditions that allowed Trump to win the Presidency despite his accusers' credible allegations of harassment and assault. The energy of that moment has resulted in record numbers of female candidates running for office. While the main narrative of the wave of victories in the Virginia House of Delegates last November was its potential as a predictor of the 2018 midterms, Election Night also brought eleven women—the first trans woman and the first Asian-American and Latina women among them—into that state's legislative body.

The amorphous shock and outrage of a year ago have given way to the broad contours of a movement. Trump's authoritarian tendencies have been met by a majority in both houses of Congress, led by a stunningly pliable Republican Party. (At the State of the Union, Democrats registered dissent by boycotting, dressing in black, and wearing kente cloth and purple ribbons.) That conjunction has made it far easier for the President to achieve his agenda than for concerned citizens to place barriers in his path. These are perilous times. But it's possible, when looking from just the right angle and at exactly the right moment, to discern something that looks strikingly similar to inspiration.

# Chaos in the White House

Politico Playbook

March 3, 2108

THE BIG PICTURE –

JOHN HARRIS and ANDREW RESTUCCIA:

"Demoralized West Wing stokes fears over Trump's capacity to handle a crisis": "Chaos here, backlash there, shock everywhere. And in Washington and around the globe another gasping chorus of WTF commentary: reckless, not normal, reality show run amok. And so on, et cetera, et cetera, for the one-hundredth-and-can't-remember time of the Trump Era.

"But there is something different about this week's spasm of sudden policy lurches, graceless personal insults, oozing scandal news, and ceaseless West Wing knife fights. It is the starkest example to date of President Donald Trump's executive style looking untenable not merely from the outside - from the perspective of establishment politicians and media analysts - but from the inside, too.

"Administration officials and outsiders with windows into decision-making describe a growing sense of despair within Trump's ranks, driven by the mounting realization that the president's brand of politics guided by intuition and improvisation is incompatible with a competently functioning executive branch. Most alarming, by these lights, is mounting evidence that Trump lacks an attribute possessed by most previous presidents and certainly by all the most successful ones: a capacity for self-critique and self-correction."

**Demoralized West Wing stokes fears over Trump’s capacity to handle a crisis**

The president has embraced chaos since the beginning, but the past week's drama has left staffers dangerously depleted.

By JOHN F. HARRIS and ANDREW RESTUCCIA

03/02/2018

Demoralized West Wing stokes fears over Trump’s capacity to handle a crisis

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But there is something different about this week’s spasm of sudden policy lurches, graceless personal insults, oozing scandal news, and ceaseless West Wing knife fights.

It is the starkest example to date of President Donald Trump’s executive style looking untenable not merely from the outside — from the perspective of establishment politicians and media analysts — but from the inside, too.

Administration officials and outsiders with windows into decision-making describe a growing sense of despair within Trump’s ranks, driven by the mounting realization that the president’s brand of politics guided by intuition and improvisation is incompatible with a competently functioning executive branch.

Most alarming, by these lights, is mounting evidence that Trump lacks an attribute possessed by most previous presidents and certainly by all the most successful ones: a capacity for self-critique and self-correction.

Most of this week’s White House furors — the president’s zig-zag comments on gun control, an announcement on steel tariffs that caught his own economic team by surprise and sent the Dow plunging, his ongoing battle with his attorney general, and reports that foreign governments were scheming to exploit the inexperience and financial vulnerabilities of son-in-law Jared Kushner — were generated from within.

That’s left many in Washington and beyond wondering what happens in the inevitable moments — every modern president has faced them — when outside events take over, and the government has to deal with a major military confrontation, a major natural disaster or some other catastrophe.

“Nobody has any idea whether he has any sense of what it means to deal with a crisis,” said Leon Panetta, President Bill Clinton’s former chief of staff and the former head of the CIA and secretary of defense under President Barack Obama. “It creates a really uncomfortable feeling because we really don’t know if we’re going to be able to confront a crisis and do it successfully.”

If such a thing happened today, Trump would face crisis with deep demoralization and discord within his ranks, backed by advisers who consider him erratic, a national security adviser (H.R. McMaster) and economic adviser (Gary Cohn) who are both rumored to be eyeing the exits or being pushed that way by others, and a White House chief of staff in John Kelly, whose relationship with Trump is being frayed to near the breaking point.

All three of these men were once described as steadying forces for a president who likes to wing it on instinct. But all three are described by administration officials as wondering whether Trump is impervious to discipline.

“The feeling right now is very similar to the way it was at the very beginning of the administration,” a former Trump official said, describing the period when then-chief of staff Reince Priebus took a back seat to former strategist Steve Bannon, who pushed divisive policies and left Priebus flailing, without any way to control Trump or corral his team.

But Kelly, once hailed as a tough-minded rule-maker, is not proving to be more effective at channeling the power of the executive in any more productive way.

Rather than changing course, Trump was described by an administration official Friday — echoing other reports — as sullen and isolated, frustrated that he is not being given credit he thinks he deserves and deeply suspicious of the people around him.

Increasingly, that suspicion is justified, as people close to Trump second-guess his judgment and his capacity to do his job. But it is also suspicion that Trump invited by undermining the very people who he asked to come help him get better at governing.

“Most presidents know when to recalibrate, to redirect, to hit a reset button” on their policies or their own leadership style, said Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who served at senior levels of both the Clinton and Obama White Houses. “So in the face of incompetence and total chaos you have a president who has no self-awareness of how bad it is.”

Panetta urged Kelly to organize a “come to Jesus moment” in which Trump’s trusted advisers along with Republican congressional leaders and business executives warn the president in the strongest terms that he’s veering off course. “I think people have to come down hard on him,” he said. “I understand he likes to manage and govern by chaos, but that instability is undermining his presidency."

Trump loyalists note that he is a personality who became president by his willingness to defy conventional notions of how candidates behave. And the sheer volume of precedent-shattering words and actions from Trump has undeniably created a dynamic in his favor: Events and scandals that would have been months-long uproars in earlier times seem to get lost in the smoke under Trump.

In the early months of Clinton’s presidency, Time magazine published a cover capturing the consensus Washington view of his stumbling start, “The incredible shrinking president.”

His “miscalculations and self-inflicted wounds,” as writer Michael Duffy described them, included firing the White House travel office, getting a haircut on Air Force One that may (or may not, as subsequent inquiries suggested) have snarled commercial traffic, and a generally sloppy and discursive style of White House decision-making.

It is hard to imagine any of those even moving the needle for more than an hour or two in the Trump Era.

Clinton was probably the recent president most Trump-like in some respects: an outsized personality, prone to outbursts of temper when he felt he wasn’t getting credit, and someone by temperament who found the traditional constraints of the presidency as inordinately confining. Like Trump, in the early days there were warring factions around Clinton.

One important difference, however, was Clinton’s gift for recalibration. After Democrats got throttled in mid-term elections in 1994, he consulted everyone from political philosophers to self-help and fire-walking guru Tony Robbins. Though Clinton’s personal indiscipline led to sexual scandal, he always prevailed through setbacks with a high degree of political discipline.

The fear that Trump, who at age 71 is a quarter-century older than Clinton was when he came to office, lacks the ability to reinvent himself or re-direct his presidency is why many on his own team have come in many respects to join the doubters.

**HOW DID WE GET HERE?** –

"Trump was angry and 'unglued' when he started a trade war, officials say," by NBC News' Stephanie Ruhle and Peter Alexander: "According to two officials, Trump's decision to launch a potential trade war was born out of anger at other simmering issues and the result of a broken internal process that has failed to deliver him consensus views that represent the best advice of his team. On Wednesday evening, the president became 'unglued,' in the words of one official familiar with the president's state of mind."

**Trump was angry and ‘unglued’ when he started a trade war, officials say**

by STEPHANIE RUHLE and PETER ALEXANDER

NBC News

WASHINGTON — With global markets shaken by President Donald Trump's surprise decision to impose strict tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, the president went into battle mode on Friday: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win," he wrote on Twitter.

But the public show of confidence belies the fact that Trump's policy maneuver, which may ultimately harm U.S. companies and American consumers, was announced without any internal review by government lawyers or his own staff, according to a review of an internal White House document.

According to two officials, Trump's decision to launch a potential trade war was born out of anger at other simmering issues and the result of a broken internal process that has failed to deliver him consensus views that represent the best advice of his team. On Wednesday evening, the president became "unglued," in the words of one official familiar with the president's state of mind.

A trifecta of events had set him off in a way that two officials said they had not seen before: Hope Hicks' testimony to lawmakers investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 election, conduct by his embattled attorney general and the treatment of his son-in-law by his chief of staff.

Trump, the two officials said, was angry and gunning for a fight, and he chose a trade war, spurred on by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Peter Navarro, the White House director for trade — and against longstanding advice from his economic chair Gary Cohn and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin.

Ross had already invited steel and aluminum executives to the White House for an 11 a.m. meeting on Thursday. But Ross, according to a person with direct knowledge, hadn't told the White House who the executives were. As a result, White House officials were unable to conduct a background check on the executives to make sure they were appropriate for the president to meet with and they were not able to be cleared for entry by secret service. According to a person with direct knowledge, even White House chief of staff John Kelly was unaware of their names.

By midnight Wednesday, less than 12 hours before the executives were expected to arrive, no one on the president's team had prepared any position paper for an announcement on tariff policy, the official said. In fact, according to the official, the White House counsel's office had advised that they were as much as two weeks away from being able to complete a legal review on steel tariffs.

In response to NBC News, another White House official said that the communications team "was well-prepared to support the president's announcement" and that "many of the attendees had been in the White House before and had already been vetted for attendance at a presidential event." A different official said of the decision, "everyone in the world has known where the president's head was on this issue since the beginning of his administration."

There were no prepared, approved remarks for the president to give at the planned meeting, there was no diplomatic strategy for how to alert foreign trade partners, there was no legislative strategy in place for informing Congress and no agreed upon communications plan beyond an email cobbled together by Ross's team at the Commerce Department late Wednesday that had not been approved by the White House.

No one at the State Department, the Treasury Department or the Defense Department had been told that a new policy was about to be announced or given an opportunity to weigh in in advance.

The Thursday morning meeting did not originally appear on the president's public schedule. Shortly after it began, reporters were told that Ross had convened a "listening" session at the White House with 15 executives from the steel and aluminum industry.

Then, an hour later, in an another unexpected move, reporters were invited to the Cabinet room. Without warning, Trump announced on the spot that he was imposing new strict tariffs on imports.

By Thursday afternoon, the U.S. stock market had fallen and Trump, surrounded by his senior advisers in the Oval Office, was said to be furious.

**THE FALLOUT** –

"Trade wars: Tariffs on bourbon, Harleys and blue jeans,"

by Doug Palmer and Adam Behsudi:

"European Union officials are already planning retaliatory actions, targeting products from politically sensitive Republican-run states, including the imposition of tariffs on Harley-Davidsons made in Speaker Paul Ryan's home state of Wisconsin; duties on bourbon made in Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's home state of Kentucky; and duties on orange juice from Florida, a critical swing state."

“We will put tariffs on Harley-Davidson, on bourbon and on blue jeans — Levis,” European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told German television. Commissioners from the EU’s 28 member countries plan to discuss the countermeasures on Wednesday.

Across the globe, Trump’s plan to impose a 25 percent duty on steel and a 10 percent duty on aluminum imports would alienate dozens of countries in Europe, North America and Asia, many of them longtime allies and trading partners, who could turn the tables by targeting key U.S. sectors such as agriculture and aircraft, based in states that elected him and fellow Republicans.

“The potential for escalation is real, as we have seen from the initial responses of others,” said World Trade Organization Director General Roberto Azevêdo. “A trade war is in no one’s interests. The WTO will be watching the situation very closely.”

EU officials also said they would roll out the measures quickly without running through a lengthy gauntlet of WTO dispute settlement procedures. Under consideration are 25 percent tariffs on $3.5 billion of goods — one-third steel products, one-third industrial goods and one-third agricultural — to “rebalance” bilateral trade, EU sources said.

The EU and Japan use a similar tactic in 2002, when former President George W. Bush also imposed sweeping duties on steel imports. Bush later withdrew the tariffs after losing a challenge brought by more than a dozen countries at the World Trade Organization.

"When a country (USA) is losing many billions of dollars on trade with virtually every country it does business with, trade wars are good, and easy to win," Trump tweeted early Friday. "Example, when we are down $100 billion with a certain country and they get cute, don't trade anymore — we win big. It's easy!"

Trump is justifying the move based on a pair of Commerce Department reports that concluded that current volumes of steel and aluminum imports threaten national security by undermining the long-term viability of U.S. producers. But most other U.S. industries and foreign countries see that as thinly-veiled protectionism.

"We have repeatedly warned that the risks of retaliation and the precedent set by such a policy have serious potential consequences for agriculture," U.S. Wheat Associates and the National Association of Wheat Growers said Thursday in a joint statement. "It is dismaying that the voices of farmers and many other industries were ignored in favor of an industry that is already among the most protected in the country." Patrick Delaney, spokesman for the American Soybean Association, told POLITICO that his industry is also "very nervous" about the White House's action.

China purchases about $14 billion worth of U.S. soybeans a year, and any hit to demand could make what is already a difficult financial situation for many U.S. farmers worse, especially after several years of low commodity prices. "It’s unfortunate that we have to pay the price when the administration prioritizes another industry over agriculture," Delaney said.

The pork industry is also “concerned that this decision may result in retaliation against pork and other U.S. goods, particularly other agricultural products,” said Dave Warner, a spokesman for the National Pork Producers Council.

“And the use of national security as a justification for the restrictions will open the door for other countries to use food security as a reason to limit agricultural imports — the ox that often gets gored by countries looking to retaliate against U.S. trade measures,” Warner added.

Retaliation could also target U.S. built aircraft, a major U.S. export industry that has supply chains woven through most states, along with major commodity crops like soybeans and corn, that could hit the red center of America, said Bill Reinsch, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But retaliation can only go so far before a country starts hurting its own businesses and consumers, Reinsch said. It’s also a risky move that could spiral into a full-blown trade war, as one set of retaliation prompts another and then another, bringing more industries into the fray.

That happened in the lead-up to the Great Depression after Congress passed what became known as the Smoot-Hawley tariff act in 1930, raising tariffs on more than 20,000 goods. That's generally blamed for worsening the Great Depression, as other countries adopted their own measures and trade volumes fell.

Meanwhile, U.S. consumers would pay more for certain products even without a trade war. That’s because U.S. manufacturers, beverage-makers and other companies that use steel and aluminum would face higher costs because of Trump's import tax.

“Make no mistake, this is a tax on American families. When costs of raw materials like steel and aluminum are artificially driven up, all Americans ultimately foot the bill in the form of higher prices for everything from canned goods to automobiles,” National Retail Federation President Matthew Shay said.

Firms and workers in the transportation, construction and packaging sectors would be especially hard-hit, said Bryan Riley, a trade specialist at the National Taxpayers Union, in a blog. “Based on 2017 import levels, a 25 percent steel tax and a 10 percent aluminum tax would represent a tax increase of up to $9.5 billion,” he said.

Rufus Yerxa, a former deputy director of the WTO who now heads the National Foreign Trade Council, a U.S. business group, underscored that point — and the risk to U.S. industries caught in the crossfire. “Construction is the largest single sector for using steel. They use all kinds of steel in construction, in commercial and residential. That means prices go up for everything they use and their sources of supply become tougher,” Yerxa said. “And then our really competitive exports, our high-technology products, our automotive products, our airplanes, our food products and everything else starts getting hit by foreign retaliation.”

As a practical matter, Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs would hit only about $40 billion to $50 billion worth of imports, out of total imports of $2.9 trillion last year. However, that's still a large enough figure to inflame relations around the world.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro downplayed the possibility of significant retaliations in a Fox Business appearance Friday, "for the simple reason that we are the biggest and most lucrative market in the world.” “They know they’re cheating us and all we’re doing is standing up for ourselves,” added Navarro, who has been a driving force in pushing Trump to move ahead with the tariffs. “This is a courageous move by Donald Trump."

Although China is blamed for creating much of the global excess capacity in steel and aluminum, the United States imports relatively little from that country because of anti-dumping and countervailing duties already in place to stem Chinese shipments. Of $29.1 billion worth of steel that the United States imported last year, $9.2 billion came from the 28 nations of the Europe Union and neighboring countries, $5.1 billion from Canada, $2.8 billion from South Korea, $2.5 billion from Mexico, $1.6 billion from Japan, $1.4 billion from Russia and just $976 million from China.

“For China, there isn't a big economic impact because it's a 25 percent tariff on about a million tons of steel and their production of crude steel is over 800 million tons, said Jeffrey Schott, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

The situation is somewhat similar for aluminum, although China is a slightly bigger player in the U.S. market: Total imports last year were $17.8 billion. That included $7.3 billion from Canada, $1.6 billion from Russia, $1.4 billion from the United Arab Emirates, $1.3 billion from China and $582 million from Argentina.

Still, the Trump administration is already planning another action aimed solely at Chinese policies and practices that it says puts billions of U.S. intellectual property at risk and forces American companies to hand over valuable technology. That could potentially lead to the United States imposing retaliatory tariffs on an array of Chinese goods — setting the stage for a bilateral trade row that could hit an array of U.S. sectors. Agriculture would be particularly vulnerable since China is the top U.S. customer for soybeans, as well as overall U.S. agricultural exports.

Catherine Boudreau contributed to this report.

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"**Trump's tariff plan upends NAFTA talks,"**

by Megan Cassella in Mexico City:

"President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally slap tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum has staggered the NAFTA renegotiation and threatens to derail talks that were already politically and economically sensitive for all three countries. Canadian, Mexican and U.S. government officials and industry representatives, gathered here for the seventh negotiating round, were sent scrambling when Trump announced plans to levy tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminum imports to protect U.S. national security interests.

"While negotiators have continued to meet, the tone has changed as Canadian and Mexican representatives try to figure out the impact on their countries and whether their leaders will retaliate if Trump doesn't backtrack. 'Why are we signing a trade deal with a country that would unilaterally decide to restrict certain sectors?' said Jorge Guajardo, a former Mexican ambassador who now works as a senior director at McLarty Associates in Washington."

**THIS COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS** -- "Trump Won't Exclude Allies From Tariffs, White House Says," by WSJ's Jacob M. Schlesinger: "President Donald Trump plans to apply his steel and aluminum tariffs globally and won't exempt allies such as Canada and Europe, a senior White House official said Friday, an approach that is likely to intensify protests over the move. The statement that there would be no exceptions to the duties came as Trump aides started to flesh out the president's broad Thursday announcement, in which he said the U.S. plans to impose tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum. Officials are scrambling to finalize many details ahead of a planned rollout of the full policies next week."

# President Trump and truth: Another difficult week

By Dan Balz

The Washington Post Chief correspondent

April 7, 2018

President Trump’s capacity to make things up is one of the defining features of his presidency. His loose adherence to the truth, when it suits his political purposes, seems to know few limits.

The president was at a roundtable discussion in West Virginia on Thursday for an event designed to highlight the new tax law, which Republicans are counting on to hold down expected losses in the November midterm elections. Theatrically, he tossed aside the pieces of paper that were to be the highlights of his message. In going off script, he wandered into territory he had explored earlier in his presidency — the claim that there were millions of illegal votes cast in the 2016 election. It’s the reason, he said, that he lost the popular vote to Hillary Clinton.

But if his bottom line was unchanged, remarkably, he had a revised claim about what happened on Election Day. His earlier charge was that 3 million to 5 million people had voted illegally. He offered no evidence, and White House advisers were flummoxed when asked to back up what the president said because **there was no proof**.

"When we talk about the rules of being a real man, those rules aren't just handed to us on a sheet of paper, they're pounded into us daily." - Mark Greene, Senior Editor, The Good Men Project

Eventually, Trump used the baseless claim to order up a national commission to investigate what he insisted was widespread voter fraud in the United States. The commission was chaired by Vice President Pence, with Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach serving as vice chair, principal administrator and chief advocate of Trump’s assertion. The commission quickly devolved into a pool of partisan wrangling and some months later was dissolved by the president. No evidence was ever discovered that the election had been marred by significant voter fraud.

Trump, however, cannot let go. On Thursday, he found his way back to the issue during a rambling discussion of illegal immigration, border security and **his plan to send the National Guard to police the U.S. border with Mexico**. He argued that Democrats have a vested interest in the current immigration system, particularly the provision that allows family members of immigrants to apply for admission. “This is what the Democrats are doing to you,” he told the audience. “And they like it because they think they’re going to vote Democrat. Okay? Believe me, they’re doing that for that reason.” The audience applauded.

Trump said immigrants allowed into the country under the so-called chain or family migration provision would overwhelmingly **vote for Democrats** rather than Republicans. And then came this: “In many places, like California, the same person votes many times.” The audience laughed. “**You probably heard about that**. They always like to say, ‘Oh, that’s a conspiracy theory.’ Not a conspiracy theory, folks. Millions and millions of people.”

So now the claim is not just that 3 million to 5 million people voted illegally, but that millions and millions of people are voting many times each, in California alone.

It would be easy to dismiss all this as more of the same — mostly harmless commentary tossed out to an audience of supporters by the president — all in keeping with what he does. Yet each time he comes back to this particular claim, it strikes anew at one of the foundations of a democratic society. Every time he makes the accusation, he threatens to undermine confidence in the electoral system, which is already under assault by Russia and which will be tested anew in 2020.

Then there was the president’s week-long obsession with the “**caravan**” of migrants heading from Central America into Mexico and, as he tweeted, threatening to come across what he suggested was the porous U.S.-Mexico border. He made it sound like an invading army marching north. “ ‘Caravans’ coming,” he tweeted at the beginning of the week. “Republicans must go to **Nuclear Option** to pass tough laws NOW.”

He claimed Mexico had “absolute power” to stop the caravan from entering that country, so as to prevent it from passing through to the United States. In contrast, he said this country “has no effective border laws.” He claimed new legislation is needed to prevent the “massive inflow of Drugs and People.” He later tweeted, “Caravans are heading here. Must pass tough laws and build the WALL. Democrats allow open borders, drugs and crime!” He said the caravan was heading toward “our ‘Weak Laws’ Border.” He then decided that, in the absence of the wall, he would order the National Guard to the border.

At his West Virginia event, Trump returned to something he had raised on the day he announced his candidacy in June 2015. At his announcement, he charged that Mexico was sending its worst people across the border illegally, including rapists. On Thursday, he brought charges of rapes to the story of the caravan, though in a different context, with women in the caravan as victims. “Remember my opening remarks at Trump Tower, when I opened [the campaign],” he said. “**Everybody said, ‘Oh, he was so tough,**’ and I used the word ‘rape.’ And yesterday, it came out where, this journey coming up, women are raped at levels that nobody has ever seen before.” No one was quite sure where Trump came up with the claim, nor were his advisers able to provide evidence or background to support it.

On the day Trump was speaking, the caravan was beginning to break up. Some in the group were intent on reaching the border with the United States, where they hoped to be able to seek asylum. But others had no intention of staging the kind of invasion the president seemed to believe was imminent. The caravan appeared to be the same as it has been in recent years: no major threat.

The president credited Mexico’s “strong immigration laws” for the dispersal of the caravan and then returned to another theme since he became president, the fact that illegal border crossings were at historic lows. “Because of the Trump Administrations [sic] actions, Border crossings are at a still UNACCEPTABLE 46 year low,” he tweeted.

On Friday, the Wall Street Journal editorial page opined, “President Trump can’t seem to decide whether his border-control plan is a success or an imminent national crisis.” The Journal editors noted that the strong U.S. economy probably was attracting more immigrants (border crossings were higher last month than in March 2017). The editorial urged Trump to make a deal on immigration legislation, one that would trade greater security for changes to allow more legal immigrants. The editorial concluded with this: “**Then he wouldn’t have to pull stunts like hyping a band of poor migrants as an invading army**.”

Flying back from West Virginia on Thursday, the president answered a few questions from reporters. He was asked whether he had known about the $130,000 payment to adult-film star **Stormy Daniels by Michael Cohen**, his personal lawyer, shortly before the 2016 election. “No,” Trump replied. Daniels claims to have had a brief affair with the president more than a decade ago. The president told reporters to ask Cohen why the payment was made. He did not respond to a question about whether he had established a fund from which Cohen could draw money.

Perhaps all that is the truth.

Dan Balz is chief correspondent at The Washington Post. He has served as the paper’s deputy national editor, political editor, White House correspondent and Southwest correspondent.

# Republican judges warn of ‘tyranny’ as they block Trump on ‘sanctuary cities’

Trump, anti-immigration allies lash 'sanctuary' cities with strong language

BY JAMES HOHMANN with Breanne Deppisch and Joanie Greve

The Washington Post

April 20, 2018

THE BIG IDEA: A panel of three judges, each appointed by a Republican president to the federal appeals court in Chicago, ruled unanimously on Thursday **against President Trump’s effort to withhold money from “sanctuary cities.”**

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit upheld a nationwide injunction that blocks the Justice Department from using “the sword of federal funding to conscript state and local authorities to aid in federal civil immigration enforcement.”

Trump’s latest courtroom defeat offers yet another civics lesson about checks and balances for the first president in American history who lacks any prior governing or military experience. Unlike congressional Republicans who have by and large kowtowed and capitulated to Trumpism, despite private uneasiness and grumbling in many cases, Republican-appointed judges are free not to care about the wrath of the president or blowback from his loyalists. This gives them the breathing room to worry more about the rule of law than partisanship. That was the point of an independent judiciary and giving lifetime appointments. It’s how the Constitution is supposed to work.

Judge Ilana Rovner, who was appointed to a district judgeship by Ronald Reagan and elevated to the circuit by George H.W. Bush, offers a remarkable rebuke of the Trump administration in a 35-page opinion that can be read as a tutorial on the separation of powers. She even throws around words like “tyranny” that you don’t often see in opinions of this nature: “Our role in this case is not to assess the optimal immigration policies for our country,” she writes. “Rather, the issue before us strikes at one of the bedrock principles of our nation, the protection of which transcends political party affiliation and rests at the heart of our system of government …

“The founders of our country well understood that the concentration of power threatens individual liberty and established a bulwark against such tyranny by creating a separation of powers among the branches of government. If the Executive Branch can determine policy, and then use the power of the purse to mandate compliance with that policy by the state and local governments, all without the authorization or even acquiescence of elected legislators, that check against tyranny is forsaken…

“Congress repeatedly refused to approve of measures that would tie funding to state and local immigration policies. Nor … did Congress authorize the Attorney General to impose such conditions. It falls to us, the judiciary, as the remaining branch of the government, to act as a check on such usurpation of power. We are a country that jealously guards the separation of powers, and we must be ever‐vigilant in that endeavor.”

Rovner, 79, and her parents fled Latvia, and the Nazis, when she was an infant. She lost family members in the Holocaust. She often says that she decided to become a lawyer to stop anything like that genocide from happening again. Displayed in her chambers are the green card she was issued when she arrived in America in 1939 and her mother’s passport. “These are the things that saved my life,” she told the Chicago Tribune for a 2011 profile.

Her scathing opinion was joined by Judge William Bauer, who was appointed by Gerald Ford. Judge Daniel Manion, who Reagan put on the bench, wrote a concurrence saying he would have narrowed the injunction to protect only Chicago, rather than keeping it national.

The injunction was ordered last September by District Judge Harry Leinenweber, who was also appointed by Reagan.

Sessions in 2017: 'Sanctuary' cities lead to crime

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has tried to require that cities give federal immigration agents access to undocumented immigrants who are in their jails in order to get certain public safety grants. This effort has already been blocked in separate lawsuits by federal judges in California and Pennsylvania. The judge who blocked the administration from holding back money from Philadelphia, Michael Baylson, was appointed by George W. Bush and wrote an unusually long 128-page ruling against the administration in November.

The 7th Circuit opinion yesterday complains that the term sanctuary cities “is commonly misunderstood” and “a red herring.” Contrary to popular understanding, the judges explain, “the federal government can and does freely operate in ‘sanctuary’ localities.”

-- The Justice Department quickly criticized the ruling, saying the administration continues to believe it has the power to attach strings to money appropriated by Congress and complaining that courts keep issuing broad injunctions that thwart Trump. “Many in the legal community have expressed concern that the use of nationwide injunctions is inconsistent with the separation of powers, and that their increased use creates a dangerous precedent,” DOJ spokesman Devin O'Malley said in a statement. “We will continue to fight to carry out the department's commitment to the rule of law, protecting public safety, and keeping criminal aliens off the streets to further perpetrate crimes.”

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel held an afternoon press conference to blast Trump as petty for refusing to hand over the grant money while the case continues to play out in the courts. “The Trump Justice Department could actually say ‘OK, we’re going to go forward with these grants, and let’s fight the case out in court,’” said the Democrat, who was Barack Obama’s first White House chief of staff. “But they refuse to give municipalities like Chicago and other cities around the country the resources to fight crime and gun violence, because they think fighting us on the principle of being a sanctuary, welcoming city, is more important than helping the police departments get the technology they need to do a better job in public safety.”

This is just the latest legal setback for Trump when it comes to his far-reaching immigration agenda.

On Tuesday, Justice **Neil Gorsuch** joined the Supreme Court’s four liberal members to strike down part of a federal law used to deport noncitizens who commit felonies on the grounds that it was unconstitutionally vague. The 5-to-4 decision could limit the government’s ability to deport people with criminal records, a Trump priority.

“**Vague laws invite arbitrary power**,” Gorsuch wrote in a concurring opinion. “Today’s vague laws … can invite the exercise of arbitrary power all the same — by leaving the people in the dark about what the law demands and allowing prosecutors and courts to make it up.”

“For the conservative Gorsuch to align with the liberals might seem a surprise, but his vote was in keeping with questions he asked during oral argument in October. And he was in part following in the footsteps of the justice he replaced, the late Antonin Scalia,” explains Supreme Court beat reporter Robert Barnes. “In 2015, Scalia wrote the court’s decision in Johnson v. United States, which struck down a similarly vague description of violent felony in the Armed Career Criminal Act.”

Trump is incensed about Gorsuch’s vote. Administration officials say the president has been complaining to them that the justice “had proved too liberal in recent cases,” Robert Costa, Josh Dawsey and Rosalind S. Helderman report. “Associates … said it renewed his doubts that Gorsuch would be a reliable conservative. One top Trump adviser played down the comments as unhappiness with Gorsuch’s decision rather than with Gorsuch broadly.”

In February, the Supreme Court rejected Trump’s request to immediately review the lower court decisions that prevent him from ending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA). Getting cert would have only taken four votes, which means at least one GOP appointee opposed the administration’s request. The litigation over the fate of the “dreamers” will now follow the normal process, winding through the circuit courts.

D.C. is a sanctuary city. Here's what that means.

The courts have proven vexing for Trump since his first days in office. District Judge James Robart in Washington state, who was nominated by George W. Bush in 2004, halted the president’s first travel ban, which blocked citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the United States. “The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law-enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned!” Trump tweeted angrily.

But it wasn’t. A three-judge panel on the 9th Circuit, which included another Bush 43 nominee, unanimously agreed. The administration withdrew the ban and issued another watered-down version.

Barack Obama also lost cases in the courts, including on immigration. But he typically failed before conservative judges who had been appointed by Republicans more than judges appointed by his Democratic predecessors. The Harvard-educated former constitutional law professor had a much better record. To be sure, most judges appointed by Republicans are still siding with the administration most of the time. And Trump is remaking the judicial branch by appointing nominees who share his worldview.

# Trump's shifting story on Comey's firing

The Justice Department gave Congress redacted versions of James Comey’s memos, detailing his interactions with Trump while he was FBI director. The contemporaneous notes show Trump expressing concerns about the judgment of Michael Flynn (who was then national security adviser) weeks before forcing him to resign. They offer fresh details about Trump's efforts to personally influence the FBI's Russia investigation. “The memos also reveal the extent of Trump’s preoccupation with unproven allegations that he had consorted with prostitutes while in Moscow in 2013. Trump, according to the memos, repeatedly denied the allegations and prodded Comey to help disprove them, while also recalling being told by Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russia has the most beautiful prostitutes,” per Ellen Nakashima and Devlin Barrett.

Here are a few of other nuggets:

“In a Jan. 28, 2017, memo, Comey said Trump castigated Flynn for not promptly scheduling a return phone call of congratulations from a foreign head of state. ‘In telling the story, the President pointed his fingers at his head and said, ‘the guy has serious judgment issues,’ Comey wrote.”

“In early February, Comey met with then-White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, who asked the FBI director ‘if this was a ‘private conversation.’ I replied that it was,’ Comey recounted in one memo. Priebus then asked if the bureau was wiretapping Flynn … ”

“Comey’s memo of his Feb. 14, 2017, discussion with Trump also includes a previously unreported exchange about trying to prevent leaks. … [Trump said stopping leaks] may involve putting reporters in jail. ‘They spend a couple days in jail, make a new friend, they are ready to talk.’”

These memos only got released because Republicans lawmakers demanded they be turned over and threatened to hold Trump officials at the Justice Department in contempt if they weren't, even raising the specter of impeachment. It's hard to overstate how irregular it is for DOJ to release evidence central to an ongoing federal investigation. Special counsel Robert Mueller is probing whether Trump obstructed justice, and these notes would be key building blocks of any obstruction case.

Trump has denied Comey's account of their conversations and says the memos support his side of the story. Republicans are also arguing Comey is a leaker because some of the memos are redacted, but there's no indication he disclosed classified information. But this is part of the GOP plan to try to blunt the impact of the former FBI director's book:

The memos don't actually show whether collusion or obstruction took place — that is something for Mueller to decide.

This morning, Trump again attacked Comey's book and expressed sympathy for Flynn:

# Giuliani Joins Trump Legal Team

Former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani joined Trump's legal team in an attempt to bring an end to the Mueller probe. Robert Costa, Josh Dawsey and Rosalind S. Helderman report: “The entry of Giuliani, an experienced attorney with a combative reputation, immediately raises questions about how Trump will engage with Mueller and the leadership at Justice. ‘I’m doing it because I hope we can negotiate an end to this for the good of the country and because I have high regard for the president and for Bob Mueller,’ Giuliani said in an interview[.] In recent days, the president has been regularly venting and speculating to aides about his legal status and the expected timeline for the Russia investigation to end …”

Giuliani declined to say if Trump has made a final decision on whether to sit for an interview with Mueller’s team, or whether Trump could move to fire Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein in the coming weeks. “I’m not involved in anything about those issues,” he said. “My advice on Mueller has been this: He should be allowed to do his job. He’s entitled to do his job.”

Trump has “loudly and repeatedly complained” to aides that Comey, Andrew McCabe and Hillary Clinton, among others, “should be charged with crimes for misdeeds alleged by Republicans”: “Although White House officials said Thursday that Trump has not called Justice Department officials or taken any formal action, the persistent grousing has made some advisers anxious.”

Rosenstein told Trump last week that he is not a target in either the Mueller's probe or the investigation into the president's lawyer, Michael Cohen. The move has quelled — at least temporarily — Trump’s desire to oust him or Mueller, Bloomberg News's Jennifer Jacobs and Chris Strohm report: “After the meeting [with Rosenstein], Trump told some of his closest advisers that it’s not the right time to remove either man since he’s not a target of the probe. One person said Trump doesn’t want to take any action that would drag out the investigation. The shift gives some breathing room for Mueller, as well as Rosenstein [and] last week’s meeting was set up in part to allow Rosenstein to assuage Trump’s frustration with his decisions. At the same time, Rosenstein’s message may have been based on a technicality. Trump may not officially be a target, but Mueller hasn’t ruled out making him one at some point in the future, according to a U.S. official with knowledge of the unfolding investigation.”

Prosecutors on Mueller’s team said Paul Manafort’s long-standing Russia ties merited a review of whether he provided “back channels to Russia.” Spencer S. Hsu reports: “[Deputy Solicitor General Michael R. Dreeben's] reference to back channels came during a hearing in federal court in Washington in which Manafort’s attorneys sought to have criminal charges against him dismissed. Dreeben cited Manafort’s alleged long-standing connections in Russia during a decade of work as an international political consultant in Ukraine and said it was ‘only natural’ to investigate whether those ties were a means of ‘surreptitious communications. Did they provide back channels to Russia?’”

DOJ's inspector general referred his finding that former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe repeatedly misled investigators to Washington’s top federal prosecutor, who will determine whether McCabe should be charged with a crime. From Karoun Demirjian and Matt Zapotosky: “The referral to the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia occurred some time ago, after the inspector general concluded McCabe had lied to investigators or his boss, [Comey], on four occasions, three of them under oath. The U.S. attorney’s office met with McCabe’s legal team in recent weeks, though it was not immediately clear whether prosecutors there were conducting their own investigation or believed criminal charges are appropriate ... A referral to federal prosecutors, though, does not necessarily mean McCabe will be charged.”

Michael Cohen has withdrawn his libel lawsuit against BuzzFeed and Fusion GPS over the infamous dossier, which suggested Cohen helped facilitate Russian interference into the 2016 election. Rosalind S. Helderman and John Wagner report: “[The lawsuits] would have required Cohen to submit to an evidence discovery process, forcing him to produce documentation and sworn testimony about his activities … Among other things, the dossier alleged that Cohen had traveled to Prague and met with Russian operatives. Cohen filed a pair of lawsuits in January … claiming he could prove that the allegation was false and had harmed his reputation. In a statement, Cohen’s lawyer said he continues to deny the allegations but had to concentrate on other legal matters after [last week’s FBI raid].”

# How a week of triumph for Trump was convulsed by chaos and contradiction

Washington Post

By Philip Rucker, Josh Dawsey and Ashley Parker

April 26, 2018

The final week of April was designed to be a triumphant one for President Trump. He hosted his closest foreign counterpart, French President **Emmanuel Macron**, for a state visit, complete with a 21-gun salute. He may be on the cusp of a diplomatic breakthrough with **North Korea** for the rogue state to abandon its nuclear weapons program. And he is set to put an exclamation point on it all where he feels most at home: onstage Saturday night in Michigan, riffing and ripping the elites at a rally of his fervent supporters.

But instead, it became yet another week in which the Trump administration was convulsed by chaos and contradiction.

A darkening cloud hung over Trump’s Cabinet on Thursday, as he had to abruptly withdraw his nominee to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs, **Ronny L. Jackson,** amid explosive allegations of poor conduct and negligence as the president’s personal physician. Jackson said the allegations were false, but still took his name out of consideration for the VA job.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator **Scott Pruitt** also struggled Thursday before a Senate committee to answer for his ethical lapses and profligate spending. Two days earlier, **Mick Mulvaney**, who heads the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau as well as directing the Office of Management and Budget, told banking executives that as a South Carolina congressman he prioritized meetings with lobbyists who gave him campaign contributions.

The Cabinet struggles do not end there.

**Gina Haspel**’s nomination to become CIA director is imperiled because senators are protesting her work overseeing enhanced interrogation on CIA prisoners, including techniques critics liken to torture. To get confirmed, a senior administration official said, she will have to have “a near perfect performance.” Haspel is in line to succeed Mike Pompeo, whose nomination to become secretary of state was so uncertain that on Monday Trump had to personally lobby Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) to table his objections and vote to approve Pompeo.

“There are enough nominees to deal with, just with the president’s executive calendar on the courts, and then on Cabinet and ambassadorships, without churning through Cabinet members like this,” said Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). “It’s not helpful.”

Said one Trump adviser, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to offer a candid assessment: “It’s a joke. The whole thing is a joke.”

There is some concern among Republican strategists that the converging controversies could weigh down GOP candidates in November’s midterm elections.

“We’re living in a season of corruption the likes of which we haven’t seen but in a banana republic,” said Steve Schmidt, a veteran Republican Party operative and Trump critic. “. . . Everywhere you look you see **incompetence, malfeasance, self-dealing and corruption.**”

But others said the sagas gripping Washington are unlikely to affect voters in the rest of the country. In North Dakota, home to one of the biggest Senate battles, Gov. Doug Burgum (R) said the farmers and energy workers he meets with hear about controversy and are inclined to believe the media and political establishments are out to get Trump. “There’s a sense that if ‘the swamp’ is not busy trying to block the Trump agenda and block Trump appointees, they’re trying to drive down those people on the Cabinet pushing the agenda,” Burgum said.

As former Virginia congressman Tom Davis (R) put it, “Voters don’t care about the emoluments clause and all the background noise. . . . People just push the mute button.”

Inside the White House, the responses to this week’s convulsions were being personally directed by Trump, who has been acting as his own strategist and making decisions unilaterally — sometimes to the surprise of his senior staffers. “It’s starting to feel like the early days again, with everyone running around red-faced, trying to keep up with this president,” said a Republican strategist close to the White House, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to offer a candid assessment.

Personnel matters are ordinarily the purview of the chief of staff, but John F. Kelly is a diminished figure these days. His influence a mere shell of what it was in his heyday of near-complete control — a downfall one West Wing staffer characterized as moving from the enforcer to an afterthought. So it was that Trump’s, and thus the administration’s, support for Jackson zigzagged over a chaotic 36-hour period this week.

White House officials said they were unaware Monday that accusations about Jackson would be coming, but allegations first surfaced later in the day that Jackson had improperly dispensed drugs and became intoxicated on duty. Trump on Tuesday initially guided his nominee toward the exit. “I said to Dr. Jackson, ‘What do you need it for?’ ” the president told reporters, bemoaning the Senate confirmation process as “too ugly” and “too disgusting.” “If I was him,” he added, “I wouldn’t do it.”

But a couple hours later, after huddling with Jackson, Trump decided to stand by the man he affectionately calls “the Doc” or “Doc Ronny.” He told advisers that although he was fine with Jackson dropping out, one of them said, “the doctor really wants to fight.” In addition, another adviser said, the president was reluctant to dump Jackson because he was afraid it would be interpreted as him giving in to criticism that he had hired a physician with no significant management experience to run one of the government’s most sprawling bureaucracies.

“The president is clearly of two minds about it,” said a third Trump adviser, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly. “His typical instinct is deny, deny, deny, defend, defend, defend, fight, fight, fight. But what he said out loud at length [on Tuesday] was giving Ronny the opportunity to bow out and in some ways encouraging him to.”

Trump ordered the White House staff to rally to Jackson’s defense, and a full-throated, proactive campaign was launched. Communications aides scrambled late into the evening to craft talking points for the media. Surrogates were deployed on cable news to praise Jackson and knock down the allegations. Military aides, Secret Service agents and others who had worked with Jackson were asked to help push back on damaging stories. And legislative affairs director Marc Short worked senators as what one outside adviser described as “a one-man band trying to keep Ronny L. Jackson afloat.”

Staffers said they readily rushed to Jackson’s defense in part because they were told to by the president and in part because they found the allegations inconsistent with the doctor they had come to know through many days traveling together. White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Wednesday that Jackson’s record as presidential physician was “impeccable.” She said that he underwent four separate background investigations, including one by the FBI, that found no indication of wrongdoing.

“In a normal administration, you might be told you have to cut bait, you’re out,” said Sean Spicer, Trump’s first White House press secretary. “You get latitude you might not in normal worlds. Trump shares that feeling of people fighting back when they get personally attacked. When you’re right, you fight.”

The fight did not last long, however. On Wednesday afternoon, a two-page summary of allegations, written by Democrats on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, included accusations from unnamed colleagues that Jackson had crashed a government vehicle while intoxicated following a Secret Service party, among numerous other offenses. Support for Jackson’s nomination evaporated almost immediately, with White House officials saying Wednesday night he was considering abandoning his bid to be VA secretary.

And just before 8 a.m. Thursday, the White House made it official: Jackson was out.

Whereas the Jackson scandal came and went in the span of three days, the Pruitt saga has been unfolding steadily for more than a month, in a cascade of damaging headlines about the administrator’s ethical blunders, security regimen and reliance on taxpayer money and government perks to support his lifestyle.

Another president might have fired Pruitt by now, but not Trump, who has become convinced that the EPA chief is a singular warrior for his deregulation agenda. While other Cabinet officials caught in ethical peccadilloes have apologized and promised to do better, Pruitt has been defiant and has told the president he did nothing wrong, officials said.

Though Pruitt has maintained the president’s affection, officials said, he has become estranged from most of the senior White House staff. Stories about tension between Pruitt and the West Wing were described by one White House official as “brutal,” and senior aides have grown exasperated by Pruitt and fearful that even more damaging information may come out about his profligate behavior.

Trump and many of his aides said beforehand that they planned to closely monitor Pruitt’s Senate testimony on Thursday, with some White House staffers hopeful the administrator might embarrass himself. “If he screws up the testimony,” one senior White House aide said, “we have a chance at getting him out of here.”

Philip Rucker is the White House Bureau Chief for The Washington Post. Josh Dawsey is a White House reporter for The Washington Post. Ashley Parker is a White House reporter for The Washington Post.

'We're not changing any stories': Trump's week of contradiction

By Tom McCarthy, The Guardian

5 May 2018

# The end of Donald Trump’s week was shaping up nicely, on paper.

On Friday afternoon, he was to speak to a group of America’s most ardent gun enthusiasts, a crowd sure to shower him with the kind of mass adulation he finds so gratifying that, 16 months into his presidency, he has never stopped holding campaign rallies stocked with true believers.

But Trump’s speaking engagement, at the National Rifle Association’s annual meeting, was in Dallas, and he had to get there first.

That meant passing two phalanxes of reporters – one at his helicopter, one at the foot of the steps leading to Air Force One. They were bursting with questions about the whiplash turns of the past week in two of the biggest stories of his presidency, the Robert Mueller investigation and the Stormy Daniels affair.

Early in the week, a paraphrased list of **49 questions** had been leaked to the press that Mueller, the special counsel investigating alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow, reportedly wanted to ask the president. The questions focused on whether Trump had obstructed justice by firing the former FBI director **James Comey** and other acts, and what Trump knew about his campaign’s contacts with Russians.

The unwritten question was whether Trump would ever agree to such an interview – and, if he did not, whether Mueller would to try to force him through subpoena.

Then Trump’s most freshly recruited lawyer, the former New York City mayor and unashamed Trump cheerleader **Rudy Giuliani**, went on TV and delivered a bombshell. He said that money used to seal a 2016 hush agreement with the porn actor Stormy Daniels had come from Trump, who had earlier flatly denied, on camera, any knowledge of the $130,000.

Confronted on the tarmac at Andrews air force base about the Daniels payment, Trump grew aggressive. “This country right now is running so smooth, and to be bringing up that kind of crap, and to be bringing up witch-hunts all the time, that’s all you want to talk about,” Trump said.

But wasn’t he the one who had an alleged extramarital affair with a porn actor, then secretly moved money to pay her not to talk about it right before the election, then said he had no knowledge of the payment, then this week tweeted that non-disclosure agreements “are very common among celebrities and people of wealth”? “We’re not changing any stories,” Trump said.

With the tangled vines encircling Trump’s White House growing ever thicker, the president’s path to emerge from the scandals around him becomes increasingly obscure with each passing day. At the same time, the tools at Trump’s disposal to free himself might not be as effective as they once were.

Not so long ago, the hiring of Giuliani, a former US attorney and street fighter who goes so far back with Trump that he once dressed in drag and pretended to be molested by him, might have enhanced Trump’s power to take his case to the American public. Instead, on day one, Giuliani, 73, appeared to be having trouble getting up to speed on the foregoing months of lawsuits and contradictory statements that the president’s camp has issued about the Stormy Daniels affair. The former mayor immediately stepped in it, letting slip that Trump had paid his personal lawyer **Michael Cohen** $35,000 a month in part to meet the payment made to Daniels.

That gave the lie to a Trump statement aboard Air Force One on 5 April, when reporters asked him whether he knew where Cohen got the money to pay Daniels.

“No, I don’t know,” Trump said.

On Friday, Trump blamed Giuliani’s newness in his role as he tried to clear up confusion about the payment – “It’s actually very simple,” Trump said, without explaining how. “Rudy is a great guy, but he just started a day ago,” adding: “He started yesterday. **He’ll get his facts straight**. He’s a great guy.”

“It’s a question of misinterpretation,” Giuliani chimed in in a separate interview, which concluded with a denial that he had lost his place in the president’s affections: “He says he loves me.”

Those who would speak for Trump must be willing to ride the narrative tiger, and sometimes to be bitten. Even **Sarah Sanders**, the counter-attacking White House press secretary, adopted a defensive crouch when she was pressed on Thursday to explain contradictions in the changing White House account of the Stormy Daniels case. “Again, I gave you the best information that I had,” Sanders said, over and over again.

While the struggling among Trump’s surrogates to stay on the same page has a slapstick quality, the seriousness of the allegations that Mueller is weighing against Trump lends an air of tragedy to the White House comedy of errors.

And downright ominous are the partisan attacks on the rule of law that the president continually deploys in an effort to free himself from his problems. “You have all these investigators; they’re Democrats,” Trump said of the special counsel’s team, some of whom have made campaign donations in the past to Democrats. “In all fairness, **Bob Mueller** worked for Obama for eight years.”

That is not true; Mueller, a **lifelong Republican** and decorated Vietnam veteran with a reputation as a straight-shooter, spent 12 years as FBI director, overlapping for 4.5 years with Barack Obama and 7.5 years with George W Bush, who appointed him.

Comfortable, clearly, in his contradictions, Trump said on Friday that he really wanted to sit for an interview with Mueller to help sort everything out, but his lawyers were counselling against it. “I would love to speak,” Trump said. “I would love to. Nobody wants to speak more than me – in fact, against my lawyers’ – because most lawyers, they never speak on anything. “I would love to speak, because we’ve done nothing wrong. There was no collusion with the Russians. There was nothing. There was no obstruction.”

In the convention hall at the NRA meeting in Dallas, Trump got the roaring reaction he had come looking for, as he delivered red-meat lines about freedom and protecting gun rights. But then he lapsed into reflections on his favorite topic: himself. The president bragged about how Kanye West supports him, and claimed his popularity had “doubled” among African Americans as a result. “Kanye West must have some power,” Trump said, and the sea of gun owners cheered.

# Trump Redefines GOP, politics, America

Axios Am

By Mike Allen

June 3, 2018

Donald Trump has been President Trump for 500 days as of noon today. Jonathan Swan writes that everything has changed, and nothing has changed:

**Everything changed**:

Trump has wiped out a large portion of Obama’s legacy.

He’s exited the Paris climate deal; signed major tax cuts, especially for corporations; confirmed an ultra-conservative Supreme Court justice and record numbers of circuit court judges; deregulated like crazy; exited the Iran deal; exited the TPP trade deal; repealed the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate; and moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing it as Israel’s capital.

New hardline immigration enforcement is in place, including separating children from parents of illegal immigrants.

An extraordinary percentage of Trump’s senior staff has quit or been fired. Only one campaign original remains on Trump’s staff: social media director Dan Scavino.

A national security adviser who began with bombastic high hopes of enforcing a new hard line against radical Islam — Mike Flynn — is now at personal peril in the Mueller investigation.

Trump no longer talks about wiping out the national debt by ending “waste, fraud and abuse.”

Trump no longer talks about shutting down federal agencies.

**Nothing changed**:

Family survives despite many premature obituaries about Jared and Ivanka (Javanka).

Trump still watches a ton of TV, views everything through a media lens, and obsesses over negative coverage.

Trump still views foreign negotiations as zero-sum games with a clear winner and loser. The scorecard is the bilateral trade deficit; Trump’s hardline instincts on trade and immigration are unchanged from the campaign trail.

There’s no trillion-dollar infrastructure package.

Mexico hasn’t paid for the wall — and Congress has only given Trump a pittance so far.

The national debt has climbed ever higher under Trump’s stewardship.

Trump still lies, exaggerates, distorts and responds to paper cuts by butchering his enemies.

Vice President Pence remains — and nobody I’ve spoken to has ever seen him criticize or debate the president in any meaningful way.

Trump has the same media diet: heavy on Lou Dobbs, Sean Hannity and "Fox & Friends" (with a sprinkling of hate-watch channel-surfing to CNN and MSNBC), and the same core diet of print newspapers, led by his hometown New York Times and New York Post.

Be smart: In 500 days, Trump’s **hijacking of the formerly conservative GOP is complete** — an astonishing accomplishment. The majority party in America is fully defined by his policies, his popularity with the base, his facts-be-damned mentality, his ability to control and quiet virtually all Republican elected officials.

Oh, don’t forget: He has 962 days left in this term.

# Trump calls for Russia to be reinstated to G-7, threatens allies on trade

By Damian Paletta, Anne Gearan and John Wagner

June 8, 2018

The Washington Post

CHARLEVOIX, Quebec — President Trump said Friday that Russia should be readmitted to the Group of Seven club of industrial economies four years after its expulsion over the annexation of Crimea, further provoking U.S. allies outraged or unnerved by Trump’s swerve to trade protectionism.

Trump lobbed what amounted to a diplomatic stink bomb as he left the White House for the annual two-day G-7 summit, where he arrived late and planned to leave early. Trump said he knows such outreach to Russia may not be “politically correct,” and he appeared to dismiss G-7 members’ anger and hurt feelings over what they call unfair trade barriers and ingratitude from Washington. “All of these countries have been taking advantage of the United States on trade,” Trump said, citing Canadian dairy tariffs.

“We have massive trade deficits with almost every country. We will straighten that out,” Trump said during an approximately 20-minute impromptu question and answer session with reporters outside the White House. “And I’ll tell you what, it’s what I do. It won’t even be hard. And in the end, we’ll all get along.”

Trump once again threatens to terminate trade deals

Trump did appear to get along with the other leaders when he finally arrived in this sparkling resort town on the St. Lawrence River. He arrived too late for a scheduled sit-down meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, who has been one of Trump’s toughest critics on trade over the past few weeks.

Trump’s comments on Russia, however, were a repudiation of the position the G-7 took in 2014 to exclude Russia because of what the remaining members called the illegitimate annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. “Now, I love our country. I have been Russia’s worst nightmare,” Trump said in Washington. “But with that being said, Russia should be in this meeting. “Whether you like it or not, and it may not be politically correct, but we have a world to run . . . . They should let Russia come back in.”

Most other members of the G-7, including the leaders of the United Kingdom, Germany and France, are unlikely to agree to Trump’s call for readmitting Russia, meaning the suggestion could further divide the group and make it even more ineffectual.

In an interview with Sky News on Friday, British Prime Minister Theresa May said it was important to “engage with Russia.” But, she added, “Let’s remember why the G-8 became the G-7. And before discussions could begin on any of this, we would have to ensure Russia is amending its ways and taking a different route.”

Trump’s position won backing from new Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who said he, too, wanted Russia back in the fold.

Trump has sought to improve relations between the United States and Russia since taking office, though he has faced steep criticism from lawmakers in both parties for doing so. The U.S. government and other nations have imposed strict sanctions on Russia over Crimea.

U.S. intelligence agencies have said they have “high confidence” that Russia interfered in the 2016 election, and part of this year’s G-7 summit was supposed to focus on protecting democracies from foreign meddling.

Special counsel Robert S. Mueller III is investigating Russian interference efforts, including whether Trump’s campaign colluded in any way with Russian officials, a probe that has become an obsession for the president.

Trump’s suggestion that Russia be readmitted to the G-7 was heavily criticized by political opponents back home, including Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), who said Trump was “turning our foreign policy into an international joke.” “We need the president to be able to distinguish between our allies and adversaries, and to treat each accordingly,” Schumer said. “On issue after issue, he’s failed to do that.”

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) issued a statement saying that “Vladimir Putin chose to make Russia unworthy of membership in the G-8 by invading Ukraine and annexing Crimea. Nothing he has done since then has changed that most obvious fact.” McCain, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was among the first lawmakers to call for Russia’s ejection from what was then the G-8.

Trump effectively upended this year’s G-7 summit even before it began by raising the prospect of refusing to sign on to a joint statement with other leaders asserting commonly shared principles and values.

In the past several months, Trump has pushed to completely overturn many of the post-World War II institutions put in place to strengthen global ties. These tensions have created immense strain ahead of the summit in Canada, with top leaders questioning if they are in the midst of a transformational disruption brought on by the United States.

“The rules-based international order is being challenged,” European Commission President Donald Tusk told reporters here. “Quite surprisingly, not by the usual suspects but by its main architect and guarantor, the U.S. … We will not stop trying to convince our American friends and President Trump that undermining this order makes no sense at all.” In response to Trump’s proposal for Russia, Tusk said it would only make the group more divisive. “For today, I think it’s much more important to convince our American partners to strengthen our format as guarantor of world order, than to look for something new, more challenging, more difficult,” he said.

Moscow didn’t rush to publicly embrace Trump’s pronouncement. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia preferred to emphasize “other formats” of international talks. Lawmaker Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the foreign relations committee in Russia’s upper house of parliament, said the country should only rejoin the group on its own terms — “with sanctions removed and interests respected.” “The G-8 needs Russia much more than Russia needs the G-8,” Kosachev said in a statement.

A version of the G-7 or G-8 has existed since the 1970s, designed to build a consensus among world leaders to tackle global challenges.

Trump on Friday also reiterated his plans to take a tough stance on trade with U.S. allies at the summit, threatening again to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement. “We have to change it, and they understand it’s going to happen,” Trump said. “If we’re unable to make a deal, we’ll terminate NAFTA. We’ll make a better deal.”

The comments marked the latest in declarations in recent days that have completely redirected the focus the G-7, an organization Trump has shown little regard for since taking office last year. In an earlier Twitter post, Trump said the United States would emerge victorious if other nations refused to accede to his trade demands, suggesting that he plans to employ a take-it-or-leave-it bargaining position with other world leaders at the summit here. “Looking forward to straightening out unfair Trade Deals with the G-7 countries,” Trump wrote. “If it doesn’t happen, we come out even better!”

Thursday evening, when tensions between Trump and the leaders of France and Canada appeared to be boiling over, the U.S. leader vowed to impose new tariffs and other economic penalties against Canada and the European Union if they did not allow more U.S. imports into their countries.

Trump is also scheduled to meet with Trudeau on Friday, and then he will leave the summit early Saturday, an unexpected schedule revision that will pull him out of discussions on climate change.

Many of the world leaders represented here, including Trudeau, have sought to draw Trump toward multilateral institutions despite his “America First” agenda.

But in recent weeks, there have been signs that world leaders have scrapped that approach and now plan to deal with Trump in a more adversarial way, particularly after the White House announced it would begin imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from U.S. allies beginning in June.

Macron on Thursday said Trump was isolating the United States and suggested that foreign leaders might simply wait until Trump’s time in the White House has concluded before reengaging with the United States. Trump, meanwhile, said Trudeau was acting “indignant” and attacked the United States’ northern neighbor in Twitter posts, focusing in part on Canadian dairy policy.

Trump is now engaged in trade wars with numerous countries in Europe, North America and Asia, which could affect the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars in goods, including automobiles, agricultural products and technology. He wants Europe and Japan to lower tariffs on imports of automobiles. He wants China to buy more agriculture and energy products from the United States. He is pushing Mexican leaders for a range of changes to NAFTA, and he wants that entire pact to expire after five years.

His view is that other countries have imposed unfair tariffs limiting U.S. imports for decades but that the United States has unwittingly allowed those countries to bring low-cost goods into the country, hurting American companies and workers.

Foreign leaders are aware of the shaky ground Trump is on when he levels these trade threats, as a growing number of congressional Republicans have expressed outrage, and some are trying to intervene to strip away his powers. So far, Trump has held these lawmakers, including Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), at bay, but U.S. business groups — worried about the prospect of higher costs driven by Trump’s trade threats — are pushing Congress to act.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, appears to be enjoying an “I told you so” moment as it watches Trump’s escalating conflict with America’s closest allies. Putin has long spoken about the dangers of a world dominated by the United States, and on Thursday, he said that with Trump’s metals tariffs, Europeans were getting their comeuppance for showing excessive deference to Washington — and getting a taste of the way the United States has long treated Russia.

“Our partners probably thought that these counterproductive policies would never affect them,” Putin said in his annual televised call-in show. “No one wanted to listen, and no one wanted to do anything to stop these tendencies. Here we are.”

Paletta reported from Quebec City. Wagner reported from Washington. Anton Troianovski in Moscow contributed to this report.

# A couple of days in the life of Trump

Axios PM

By Mike Allen

June 15, 2018

President Trump gave a semi-surprise interview on Fox & Friends on Friday morning, where he claimed former FBI Director James Comey had acted criminally, called the Justice Department's IG report "wrong" and praised Kim Jong-un's leadership.

Why it matters: Yet again, Trump proves that he is his best and favorite spokesperson.

**Jim Comey**:

"I think Comey was the ringleader of this… den of thieves.”

When asked if Comey should be locked up, Trump said “What [Comey] did was criminal. What he did was a terrible thing to the people. What he did was so bad in terms of our Constitution, in terms of the well-being of our country. What he did was horrible. Should he be locked up? Let somebody make the determination.”

Be smart: The report didn't accuse Comey of criminal behavior.

**Justice Department report**:

"The end result was wrong. There was total bias. Look at Peter Strzok."

"What they did during the election was a disgrace… You look at what happened, they were plotting against my election. I'm actually proud because I beat the Clinton Dynasty, I beat Bush Dynasty, Now, I guess, hopefully I'm in the process of beating very dishonest intelligence."

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump: FBI Agent Peter Strzok, who headed the Clinton & Russia investigations, texted to his lover Lisa Page, in the IG Report, that “we’ll stop” candidate Trump from becoming President. Doesn’t get any lower than that!

3:35 AM - Jun 15, 2018

**North Korea:**

Trump said that he and Kim Jong-un had "great chemistry" and that he respects that Kim is a "strong" leader who “wants to make his country great.”

"He speaks and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same." When pressed on that line, he later said, "I'm kidding, you don't understand sarcasm."

"I want to have a good relationship with North Korea... When I came in, people thought we were probably going to war with North Korea. If we did, millions of people would have been killed."

When asked why he doesn't confront Kim Jong-un's human rights record: “Because I don’t want to see a nuclear weapon destroy you and your family.”

He claimed that "war games" was his term for the military exercises between the U.S. and South Korea, again citing that he saved a lot of money by ending them. He said he never liked them.

Trump said that he gave Kim Jong-un a "very direct" number.

**Drudge**: "Drudge is great, by the way. Matt Drudge is a great gentlemen who really... he's got an ability to capture the stories people want to see."

**On pardons**: "I want people to be treated fairly."

**Michael Cohen:** "He is not my lawyer... I haven't spoken to Michael in a long time." Trump said he's not worried that he will cooperate with the Mueller investigation because, "I've done nothing wrong."

**Michael Flynn**: "I feel badly for General Flynn. He's lost his house, he's lost his life. And some people say he lied and some people say he didn't lie. I mean really it turned out maybe he didn't lie."

**Scott Pruitt:** "I'm looking at Scott. He's done a fantastic job at the EPA. I'm not happy with certain things, I'll be honest."

**Separation of families:** "I hate the children being taken away....I hate it. I hate to see separation of children and their parents." He then blamed Democrats for not cooperating in changing the "law."

**Russia annexation of Crimea**: "President Obama lost Crimea... President Obama gave away Crimea."

**Trump salutes North Korean general**

A newly released North Korean documentary on the summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un includes footage of crowds cheering Kim, and of Trump saluting a North Korean general.

Why it matters: The video Kim smiling alongside the president of the U.S., which has historically been depicted as an evil power in North Korean propaganda. It also provides North Koreans a rare glimpse of a glitzy, modern city. The documentary has been aired four times in North Korea, per 38 North's Martin Williams.

"A lot of leaders of different countries have visited Singapore but it is unprecedented in the history of Singapore to have streets filled with the welcoming crowd like this."

— Narration from the video, per CNN

The video showed the first meeting between Kim and Trump, as well as Trump saluting a Korean military officer. It also included images of the joint declaration — both in Korean and English — including the words "complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula."

The most significant findings from the **Comey FBI report**

In what the inspector general called the "highest profile investigations in the FBI’s history," the long-awaited report by the Justice Department’s office of the Inspector General goes more than 500-pages deep on the FBI's investigation, led by then-director James Comey, of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server during her time as secretary of state.

The big picture: The conclusions drawn in the watchdog's report don't have any legal clout and did not recommend a criminal investigation. However, Horowitz stressed throughout how Comey botched the public's perception of the FBI, a nonpartisan government entity.

What you need to know:

The investigation found Comey had no political bias in the case.

Horowitz said the decision to disclose the FBI's findings on the Clinton case was "extraordinary and insubordinate for Comey to do so."

More anti-Trump emails surfaced from FBI officials Lisa Page and Peter Strzok, who have been under scrutiny for recently reported texts against Trump, and were involved in an extra-marital affair.

Comey used his personal email account to "conduct unclassified FBI business."

The report highlights that the former director didn't give Attorney General Loretta Lynch notice that he was investigating Hillary Clinton's emails — a matter in which the bureau had recommend more comprehensive rules on decision-making instead of just based on principle.

In addition to Strzok and Page, texts were discovered from three more people that had "statements of hostility toward then candidate Trump and statements of support for candidate Clinton."

Strzok, who helped with the Clinton email investigation, sent text messages to Page in August of 2016 assuring Page that he would stop Trump being president. Page sent, “[Trump’s] not ever going to become president, right?" He wrote "No. No he's not. We'll stop it."

Horowitz could not find any proof the texts affected anything other than the public's perception of the FBI.

The bottom line: The 18-month investigation found "the conduct by these employees cast a cloud over the entire FBI investigation," and detailed how high-profile emails and texts distracted the public from the investigation's validity. The report managed to weave together some of the most polarizing political events of the last few years — and the spin has already begun on both sides of the political spectrum.

A federal judge has sent **Paul Manafort** to jail ahead of his trial in September, citing charges that Manafort tried to tamper with witnesses. A federal judge has sent President Trump's former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, to jail ahead of his trial in September, citing recently filed charges that Manafort tried to tamper with two witnesses. The judge also revoked his bail.

The backdrop: Federal prosecutors working for Special Counsel Robert Mueller accused Manafort of attempting to tamper with witness testimony by contacting them through encrypted text messages. Meanwhile, Manafort, who faces charges including failing to register as a foreign agent, money laundering, tax evasion, and conspiracy, has pleaded not guilty in both D.C. and Virginia.

**Rudy Giuliani** quote of the day: “When the whole thing is over, things might get cleaned up with some presidential pardons." President Trump's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, told the Daily News on Friday that after special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation concludes, those involved in the case may walk away with presidential pardons.

Why it matters: The comment came just hours after Paul Manafort was sent to jail after his bail was revoked following an attempt to tamper with two witnesses in the Russia investigation. "I don’t understand the justification for putting him in jail. You put a guy in jail if he’s trying to kill witnesses, not just talking to witnesses," he told the Daily News.

**Trade war update**: Trump announced tariffs on $50 billion in Chinese goods this morning, starting in July. China has already announced plans to retaliate. Despite President Trump's warning not to retaliate to the administration's new tariffs on Chinese goods, China's Commerce Ministry announced that the country will be implementing their own tariffs "of the same scale and the same strength" on U.S. imports in response to announcement.

Be smart, per Axios' Jonathan Swan: The $50 billion in tariffs the U.S. imposed on China is relatively minor, and Trump gave Chinese President Xi Jinping a major concession on ZTE. Xi made a personal request to Trump when it looked like ZTE could collapse as a result of U.S. actions, and the Trump administration gave the company effectively a slap on the wrist, allowing it to stay in business.

# Trump administration family separation policy

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

June 19, 2018

## Trump administration family separation policy

The Trump administration family separation policy is an aspect of the immigration policy of U.S. President Donald Trump, begun in 2018, that involves prosecuting all adults, including those applying for asylum, who are apprehended illegally crossing the U.S.–Mexico border. Under the policy, termed "zero tolerance", federal authorities separate children from their parents, relatives, or other adults who accompanied them in crossing the border: the parents are sent to federal jails while children and infants are placed under the supervision of the Department of Health and Human Services.[1]

According to the Department of Homeland Security, the policy led to the separation of around 2,000 children from their parents in its first six weeks, though others said the figure may have been much higher.[2][3] In April and May 2018, an average of 45 children were taken from their parents per day, with a total of 30,000 children expected to be detained by August 2018.[4][5] According to internal documents of the Border Patrol, 91% of the parents whose children had been forcibly taken away were being charged only with a misdemeanor.[6]

In June, U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal spoke with woman detainees at the Federal Detention Center, SeaTac, facility. She said that many of the women spoke of "fleeing threats of rape, gang violence and political persecution". More than half of the women were mothers who had forcibly been separated from their children, some as young as 12 months old and many did not know where their children were being detained. Jayapal reported, "Some of them heard their children screaming for them in the next room. Not a single one of them had been allowed to say goodbye or explain to them what was happening."[7]

The policy has attracted significant criticism and protest since its public announcement by Attorney General Jeff Sessions on May 7, 2018. In June, dozens of protest demonstrations were held, attracting thousands. In Washington, Democratic members of Congress marched with others in protest.[8] Many religious groups also oppose the policy including the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals,[9] The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints[10] and the Southern Baptist Convention, a conservative evangelical denomination and the largest Protestant church in America.[11] It has also been condemned by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians and the American Psychiatric Association.[12] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called for the Trump administration to “immediately halt” its policy of separating children from their parents[13][14] and human rights activists have criticized that the policy, applied to asylum seekers, is contrary to Article 31 of the Refugee Convention.[15]

A poll released by CNN on June 18, 2018, found that two-thirds of Americans oppose the policy, with 92% of Democrats opposed and 58% of Republicans approving.[16] A Quinnipiac University poll of American voters released the same day found very similar results.[17]

## History

**Obama administration**

To ensure that parental rights were not being violated due to detention or deportation, President Barack Obama made changes to immigration policy, releasing parents and focusing on deportation of immigrants who committed crimes in the U.S.[18] When President Trump began separating families, pro-Trump pundits argued that the administration was implementing the same policy as the Obama administration.[19] PolitiFact found that the assertion that Trump was implementing the same policy as Obama to be "false", noting "Obama’s immigration policy specifically sought to avoid breaking up families. While some children were separated from their parents under Obama, this was relatively rare, and occurred at a far lower rate than under Trump."[19]

**2017**

Two weeks after President Trump was inaugurated, the administration was reviewing the idea of separating immigrant children from their mothers as a way to deter asylum-seekers.[20] In March 2017, it was first reported that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was considering a proposal to separate parents from their children if they were caught attempting to cross the border into the United States.[21][22] John Kelly, then Secretary of Homeland Security, confirmed that the policy was under consideration,[23][24] but later denied it.[25][26] Speaking on Democracy Now! the director of the National Immigration Law Center said that the policy, if implemented, would amount "to state-sanctioned violence against children, against families that are coming to the United States to seek safety" and that the administration did not act with transparency in explaining what was being proposed.[27]

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a statement to address media reports of the plan:

Federal authorities must exercise caution to ensure that the emotional and physical stress children experience as they seek refuge in the United States is not exacerbated by the additional trauma of being separated from their siblings, parents or other relatives and caregivers. Proposals to separate children from their families as a tool of law enforcement to deter immigration are harsh and counterproductive. We urge policymakers to always be mindful that these are vulnerable, scared children.

The AAP offered to assist Homeland Security in "crafting immigration procedures that protect children.”[28]

The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights at the University of Chicago Law School reported that, "As early as late spring of 2017 … we have seen a significant number of children referred to us for the appointment of a child advocate for kids taken from their parents at the border."[23] The ACLU filed a class-action lawsuit against the Trump administration charging that the administration was illegally separating children from their parents while the parents awaited asylum proceedings.[29]

In April, the DHS said they were no longer considering the policy partly due to the steep decline in mothers attempting to travel to the U.S. with their children.[30] Then, also in April, Attorney General Jeff Sessions ordered an escalation of federal prosecutions. Within five months, hundreds of children were reported to have been separated from their parents.[31] In June, the Trump administration said it was ending the Family Case Management Program, which kept asylum-seeking mothers and their children out of detention.[32] By December, after a new surge in families crossing the southern border, the DHS was again considering the policy to separate children from parents.[33]

**2018**

On April 6, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions directed federal prosecutors "to adopt immediately a zero-tolerance policy for all offenses" related to the misdemeanor of improper entry into the United States, and that this "zero-tolerance policy shall supersede any existing policies". This would aim to criminally convict first-time offenders when historically they would face civil and administrative removal, while criminal convictions were usually reserved for those who committed the felony of illegal re-entry after removal.[34][35]

In late April 2018, the media reported that a review of government data found that about 700 migrant children, more than 100 of them under the age of 4, had been taken from their parents since October 2017. At that time Department of Homeland Security officials said they did not split families to deter immigration but rather to "protect the best interests of minor children crossing our borders."[36]

On May 7, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced: If you cross the border unlawfully ... then we will prosecute you. If you smuggle an illegal alien across the border, then we’ll prosecute you. ... If you’re smuggling a child, then we’re going to prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you, probably, as required by law.[1][37]

Multiple media accounts, as well as direct testimony from detained migrants to members of Congress, report that immigrant families presenting themselves at ports of entry seeking asylum have also been separated.[38][39] Speaking on Face the Nation on June 17, Senator Susan Collins said that the Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen had testified before the Senate that asylum seekers with families would not be separated if they presented themselves at a legal port of entry. Collins added, "Yet, there are numerous credible media accounts showing that exactly that is happening, and the administration needs to put an end to that right off."[3] Later in the day Nielsen tweeted: "We do not have a policy of separating families at the border. Period."[40]

## Motivation

In February 2017, ICE asylum chief John Lafferty told DHS employees that the Trump administration was "in the process of reviewing" several policies aimed at lowering the number of asylum seekers to the United States, which included the idea of separating migrant mothers and children.[20]

Speaking on NPR in May 2018, White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly described the policy as "a tough deterrent [and] a much faster turnaround on asylum seekers". When questioned if it might be considered "cruel and heartless" to remove children from their mothers, Kelly replied, "I wouldn't put it quite that way. The children will be taken care of—put into foster care or whatever."[41]

In June 2018, Attorney General Sessions said, "If people don’t want to be separated from their children, they should not bring them with them. We've got to get this message out. You're not given immunity."[42] White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller said: "It was a simple decision by the administration to have a zero tolerance policy for illegal entry, period. The message is that no one is exempt from immigration law."[43]

The Washington Post quoted a White House official as saying that Trump's decision to enforce the current immigration law is to "force people to the table" to negotiate on laws in Congress.[44] Meanwhile, Trump tweeted: "Any Immigration Bill MUST HAVE full funding for the Wall, end Catch & Release, Visa Lottery and Chain, and go to Merit Based Immigration." [sic][45]

## Impact

In the past, most migrants illegally crossing the border came almost entirely from Mexico, however current influx now includes greater numbers of women and children fleeing violence, gang recruitment, and sexual trafficking in the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Rather than illegally crossing into the US, they are presenting themselves at the border hoping to claim asylum, which they are legally entitled to do.[36]

The number of immigrant children in custody surged following the implementation of the policy. The Department of Health and Human Services reported on May 29 "that it had 10,773 migrant children in its custody, up from 8,886 on April 29."According to Congressional testimony given by an official for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "638 adults were referred for prosecution between May 6 and May 19 under the new zero-tolerance effort and they brought 658 children with them."[46] According to figures released by the Department of Homeland Security, during six weeks in April and May 1,995 immigrant children were separated from parents. This figure does not include children of families that asked for asylum at an official border crossing and were then separated.[47][48] Speaking on Face the Nation on June 17, Senator Susan Collins suggested that the number may well be higher. [3]

In June, U.S. Representative Pramila Jayapal spoke with recently arrived detainees at the Federal Detention Center, SeaTac facility located near Seattle. The facility houses 206 immigrants, 174 of them are women. Many of the women spoke of "fleeing threats of rape, gang violence and political persecution." More than half of the women were mothers who had forcibly been separated from their children, some as young as 12 months old and many did not know where their children were being detained. Commenting on her visit of the facility, Jayapal called the women's stories "heartbreaking," saying, "I've been doing immigration-rights work for almost two decades. I am not new to these stories. I will tell you there was not a dry eye in the house. ... Some of them heard their children screaming for them in the next room. Not a single one of them had been allowed to say goodbye or explain to them what was happening."[7]

According to several defense lawyers working with the immigrants, in many cases the Border Patrol agents lie to the parents in order to get them to let go of their kids, telling them that the children are being taken for questioning or "to be given a bath".[4] In May 2018, one Honduran national committed suicide after his 3-year-old son was forcibly taken and separated from him by Border Patrol Agents. The man had crossed the Rio Grande with his son and his wife and turned himself and his family in to authorities to ask for asylum.[49]

## Facilities involved

The Ursula detention facility, operated by Customs and Border Protection, in McAllen, Texas in the Rio Grande Valley—On June 17, the facility housed 1,129 people, including 528 families and nearly 200 unaccompanied minor children.[39]

Port Isabel Detention Center, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in Los Fresnos, Texas—This facility is surrounded by swampland and houses detained parents.[39]

Casa Padre, a private facility owned and operated by Southwest Key Programs, in Brownsville, Texas—A housing facility for children built in a former Walmart and operated under contract for the Department of Health and Human Services. On June 13, it housed 1,469 children, a plurality of whom arrived as unaccompanied minors crossing the border. Southwest Key estimated that 5% of children held there had been separated from their parents.[50]

Estrella del Norte, a private facility owned and operated by Southwest Key Programs, in Tucson, Arizona—A 300-bed housing facility for children, that housed 287 children in mid-June 2018. A former staff member described conditions in the facility as increasingly "prison-like," and recounts being told to forbid siblings without their parent from hugging one another.[51]

Tornillo Port of Entry detention camp, operated by the Federal government in Tornillo, Texas—A so-called tent city erected in the desert at the Marcelino Serna Port of Entry in western Texas. The site was chosen for a tent camp slated to house thousands of migrant children, including both unaccompanied minors and children separated from their parents.[52] Representative Beto O'Rourke, who led a protest on Father's Day, June 17, 2018, was told that 200 children were being detained in the camp, 20% of whom were separated from their parents.[53]

Lack of efforts to ensure that families are reunited

A flyer circulated by the Department of Homeland Security in 2018 offering assistance to parents separated from their children while in custody.

The decision to remove children from their families was initiated with little preparedness and has resulted in numerous cases of mothers and fathers not knowing where their child is being held and children who have not had any contact with their family since they were separated. One investigation reported that "The policy is being applied in such an opaque and ad hoc manner that government case workers, public defenders, federal prosecutors, judges, and the Border Patrol do not have clear answers about if, when, or where children will be reunited with their parents, or even whether separated parents are able to communicate with their kids by phone." When asked if separated parents will "just fall into a black hole" and be unable to reunite with their children unless they hire a lawyer, a Justice Department official replied that once the parent is in ICE custody the child is taken into the Health and Human Services system and the government does not try to reunite them.[54]

Representative Pramila Jayapal met with dozens of mothers whose children have been taken away from them, and reported that in some cases Border Patrol agents told the mothers that "their families don't exist anymore".[4] The Boston Globe interviewed foster parents in Michigan who were caring for four children that had been taken from their parents; a six-year-old boy, two eight-year-old girls and a nine-year-old boy. Of the four only one child, the six-year-old, knew where his parent was. The boy and his father, from Honduras, had crossed the border six months previously in an attempt to claim asylum and he had not seen him since he had been led away in handcuffs.[54]

In May, parents in the McAllen facility were given a number to call to locate their children but it was the wrong number and no phones were available for their use. A federal public defender spoke to a judge asking that the families be reunited saying, "“This is a tragedy that’s happening right before this court. There’s a very real possibility the parent will be deported without their children.” [54]

## Reactions

### Opposition and condemnation

The policy has been condemned by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians and the American Psychiatric Association. Together, they represent more than 250,000 doctors in the United States.[12] Dr. Irwin Redlener, who co-founded Children's Health Fund, called the policy "dehumanizing" and described it as a form of child abuse.[55]

**Religious**

Many religious groups also oppose the policy including many Christian churches (the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals,[9] and the major mainline Protestant churches such as Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church, and Evangelical Lutheran Church); all four major denominations of American Judaism (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist);[56] and Islamic organizations.[57] Evangelist Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, called the practice "disgraceful" and said that "it's terrible to see families ripped apart and I don't support that one bit."[58] The Tahirih Justice Center has criticized that the policy of charging asylum seekers with a criminal offense, which subsequent separation of families, is contrary to Article 31 of the Refugee Convention.[15] This Article prohibits any party to the Convention from imposing penalties on asylum seekers on account of their illegal entry or presence, provided the asylum seekers present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

On June 18, a group of more than 600 United Methodist Church clergy and laity announced that they were bringing church law charges against Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The members of the group accused Sessions of "child abuse, immorality, racial discrimination and dissemination of doctrines contrary to the standards of the doctrine of the United Methodist Church."[59] The last charge refers to Sesssions' "misuse" of Romans 13, which he quoted to argue that secular law must always be obeyed.[60]

**United States political**

Forty Democratic United States Senators sent a letter to President Trump urging him to "rescind this unethical, ineffective, and inhumane policy and instead prioritize approaches that align with our humanitarian and American values."[61][62] The policy has also been condemned by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.[13][14]

In response to the policy, Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced a bill, Keep Families Together Act (S. 3036), under which the separation of a child from its parents would only be allowed under very specific conditions.[63][64][65] By June 18, the entire Democratic caucus of 49 senators (including the two independents who caucus with the Democrats) had signed on as cosponsors.[66]

**International political**

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein has stated that "[the] thought that any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable".[67]

**Public response**

Inspired by the viral photo of a crying two-year-old girl looking up at her mother, on June 16 a California couple started a fund-raising campaign on Facebook named "Reunite an immigrant parent with their child" with a goal of raising $1,500. As of the morning of June 19, more than $4 million had been raised. The money will go to The Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, or RAICES, and provide legal aid for immigrant parents who have been arrested at the border.[68]

The photograph was taken by a professional photographer, John Moore, just after the mother was asked to set her child down to be body-searched before boarding the Border Patrol van and the little girl began to cry. The mother is from Honduras and had been traveling for a month.[69]

### Trump administration response

President Trump said in response to the situation: "I hate to see separation of parents and children ... I hate the children being taken away." Trump has falsely blamed the Democrats for "that law" on a number of occasions despite there being no law to mandate the separation of migrant parents and children.[70][71] The Trump administration's own "zero tolerance" policy announced in April 6, 2018, is responsible for spurring the separations.[72] Trump also said he "certainly wouldn't sign the more moderate" immigration bill proposed by leaders of the House of Representatives with input from moderate Republicans and the White House.[73]

Following Christian opposition to the policy, Sessions controversially defended it by citing the Bible's Romans 13.[74][75] Several commentators have noted that before the Civil War, Romans 13 was traditionally used by advocates of slavery to justify it, and to attack abolitionists.[76]

During a June 18, 2018, White House press conference, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen stated that during the first five months of fiscal 2018, there was a "314% increase in adults showing up with kids [posing as] a family unit. Those are traffickers, those are smugglers, that is MS-13, those are criminals, those are abusers." However, using DHS data, analysis by The Washington Post found that such groups constituted only 0.61% of "family units" apprehended at the border during that period.[77]

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# 10 stories illuminate the Trump doctrine on foreign policy

By James Hohmann

July 5, 2018

The Washington Post

With Breanne Deppisch and Joanie Greve

THE BIG IDEA: President Trump believes he understands the world better than the generals, diplomats, intelligence officers and senators who have been working on national security issues for decades longer than he has.

He’s the first president in American history with no prior governing or military experience. Yet he often proceeds with the certitude of someone like Dwight Eisenhower, who led the Allied invasion on D-Day, even if he later changes his mind.

Ten stories from the past few days — mostly overshadowed by Independence Day festivities — highlight the president’s clashes with and disdain for experts in the U.S. government. Read together, they help flesh out what might be considered a Trump doctrine on foreign policy.

## 1) For Trump, history often seems to have begun when he became president.

“GOP lawmakers went to the White House last month to hear President Trump’s case for lifting U.S. sanctions on the Chinese telecommunications giant ZTE,” Erica Werner and Josh Dawsey report in today’s paper. “But even as Trump tried to convince his skeptical listeners that it was all part of a grand plan to win China’s help on North Korea, he threw in a jab. None of you, Trump told the lawmakers, had even heard of ZTE before the most recent flap. The lawmakers had indeed heard of ZTE. Several had spent years pushing action against what they viewed as unpardonable abuses by a company found guilty of selling U.S. goods to Iran — only to watch Trump sweep aside their concerns in a quick deal done with Chinese President Xi Jinping.”

The GOP senators who were in the meeting are trying to reach a deal with the House to override Trump’s deal with ZTE, but it’s hard to convince Republicans to cross Trump — even when they believe the nation’s security is at stake: “Adding to that pressure is new evidence that ZTE may be flouting the terms of the deal — sparking fresh protests from lawmakers who will have to decide in coming weeks whether to bow to White House demands and back down on punishing the company. The White House on Monday took concrete steps to begin helping ZTE. The Commerce Department issued a waiver allowing U.S. businesses to continue doing business with ZTE for one month without penalty as negotiations continue. That also could give the White House more time to work out a resolution with members of Congress.”

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), a member of the Foreign Relations and Intelligence committees, responded this way to a Wall Street Journal report that new ZTE board members installed as a condition of Trump’s deal also have ties to the Chinese state:

Marco Rubio @marcorubio

So this is the great deal we have on #ZTE? They replace board members with new directors hand­picked by the controlling shareholder who in turn is backed & controlled by the #China government. Why are we allowing them to continue to play us like this? https://www.wsj.com/articles/zte-replaces-board-to-push-trump-deal-closer-1530281683 …

2:18 PM - Jun 29, 2018

This is just the latest example. Remember when Trump declared that “no one” knew health-care policy was so difficult as he struggled to repeal Obamacare. Last year, Trump said he would be able to convince Xi to pressure North Korea to end its nuclear program. But after the two men met at Mar-a-Lago, Trump said he had not realized the complex history of the region. “After listening for 10 minutes, I realized that it’s not so easy,” Trump said last April. “You know, I felt pretty strongly that they had a tremendous power over North Korea. But it’s not what you would think.”

Trump says he won't rule out military option in Venezuela

## 2) Trump is very willing to use military force.

Last August, Trump caught the world off guard when he declared that he was “not going to rule out a military option” in Venezuela. At the time, pretty much everyone laughed off the comment as a joke and said the president should not be taken seriously when he makes such threats.

But it turns out Trump was totally serious. A new dispatch from the Associated Press reveals that Trump pressed top officials multiple times on the possibility of U.S. military action. The day before that public statement, during an Oval Office meeting about sanctions, Trump asked why he couldn’t just order an invasion of the troubled country.

“The suggestion stunned those present at the meeting, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and national security adviser H.R. McMaster, both of whom have since left the administration,” the AP’s Joshua Goodman reports. “In an exchange that lasted around five minutes, McMaster and others took turns explaining to Trump how military action could backfire and risk losing hard-won support among Latin American governments to punish President Nicolas Maduro for taking Venezuela down the path of dictatorship … But Trump pushed back. Although he gave no indication he was about to order up military plans, he pointed to what he considered past cases of successful gunboat diplomacy in the region, according to the official, like the invasions of Panama and Grenada in the 1980s…

“Shortly afterward, he raised the issue with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, according to the U.S. official. Two high-ranking Colombian officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid antagonizing Trump confirmed the report. …

“Then in September, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly, Trump discussed it again, this time at greater length, in a private dinner with leaders from four Latin American allies that included Santos … The U.S. official said Trump was specifically briefed not to raise the issue and told it wouldn’t play well, but the first thing the president said at the dinner was, ‘My staff told me not to say this.’ Trump then went around asking each leader if they were sure they didn’t want a military solution, according to the official, who added that each leader told Trump in clear terms they were sure.”

## 3) Trump is willing to reject the considered judgment of the U.S. intelligence community and the Republican members of the Intelligence committee.

Just last week, Trump tweeted: “Russia continues to say they had nothing to do with Meddling in our Election!” As if that means it’s true.

On the night before the July Fourth holiday, the Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee Richard Burr released a seven-page report affirming the intelligence community’s conclusion that the Kremlin, following the personal orders of Vladimir Putin, sought to help Trump win in 2016.

“The Senate panel called the overall assessment a ‘sound intelligence product,’ saying evidence presented by the FBI, CIA and National Security Agency supported their collective conclusion that the Russian government had ‘developed a clear preference for Trump,’” Karoun Demirjian reports. “The intelligence community determined that the Kremlin intended to ‘denigrate’ and ‘harm’ [Hillary] Clinton, and ‘undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process’ while helping Trump …

“The panel stressed that intelligence analysts were under ‘no politically motivated pressure to reach any conclusions,’ and that their conclusions had been prescient as well as accurate, noting that ‘the Committee’s investigation has exposed a far more extensive Russian effort to manipulate social media outlets to sow discord and to interfere in the 2016 election and American society’ than the officials who drafted the assessment realized at the time they were writing it.”

Trump tweeted repeatedly about the partisan House Intelligence Committee report and the Justice Department’s Inspector General report. He’s simply ignored the bipartisan consensus of the Senate committee, as he continues to insist publicly that special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into the interference is “a witch hunt.”

## 4) Trump has a very high view of his personal ability to charm other world leaders in one-on-one settings.

The president plans to meet one-on-one with Putin in Helsinki on July 16, just as he initially met with Kim Jong Un in Singapore for an hour with only their translators. “At Trump and Putin's first meeting, on the margins of the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, a year ago, the only aide to accompany the President was [Tillerson], along with a US translator. The session went so long that first lady Melania Trump was sent in to try to cut it off,” CNN’s Kevin Liptak reports. “In a second conversation during dinner at the same summit, Trump was without a translator who spoke Russian, so instead relied on Putin's. The men spoke for about an hour without any other aides present, officials said later.”

The president of the Council on Foreign Relations was troubled by these reports:

Richard N. Haass @RichardHaass

Reports @realDonaldTrump planning to meet with Putin without staff present grounds for alarm given the stakes. Increases odds Potus will freelance and that there will be subsequent disagreement over what was said and agreed. Singapore hardly a reassuring precedent in this regard.

1:10 PM - Jul 3, 2018

“If he does as badly in his July 16 meeting with Vladimir Putin in Finland as he did with Kim Jong Un in Singapore, the consequences could be catastrophic,” conservative columnist George Will writes in today’s newspaper. “[T]his innocent abroad is strutting toward a meeting with the cold-eyed Russian who is continuing to dismantle one of Europe’s largest nations, Ukraine. He is probably looking ahead to ratcheting up pressure on one of three small nations, Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia … [T]he hard man in Moscow, who can sniff softness, relishes what Singapore revealed.” George quotes at length from a National Review piece (“Kim Wins in Singapore”) by the American Enterprise Institute’s Nicholas Eberstadt (a conservative scholar on North Korea).

## 5) Trump’s unwillingness to admit he might have been played by Kim now constrains him.

The president is so eager to convince the public that his Singapore summit was a success that he’s been reluctant to acknowledge the mounting body of evidence that Pyongyang is continuing its nuclear program and has not destroyed the missile engine test site that Kim said he would last month. “Many good conversations with North Korea-it is going well!” the president tweeted Tuesday.

Trump is in sales mode and has already looked to blame others, including critics in Congress, for any bad news from the Korean Peninsula.

Some experts fear the repatriation of American remains from the Korean War, which Kim committed to during the summit, will now simply be used as a bargaining chip. “[T]he up-and-down nature of past efforts suggests the process could be fraught with pitfalls, including a mixed record of cooperation from the North Koreans,” Dan Lamothe and Paul Sonne report. “Any successful repatriation also will face the laborious identification process that has dragged on for years with the remains already in U.S. possession. ‘They use remains as bait,’ Danny Russel, a career diplomat who focused on North Korea for both the State Department and White House during the Obama administration, said of the North Koreans. ‘They use them to sort of chum the water.’”

## 6) Trump is very confident that he can negotiate better nuclear deals than his predecessors.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is flying today to North Korea for a third visit with Kim to put some meat on the bones of the generic pledge to pursue denuclearization. In recent days, Trump sent a personal letter to Kim. The contents are unknown.

“Complicating the task is this: Mr. Pompeo, a former C.I.A. chief who knows the details of the North Korean program intimately and has solicited plans for how to accomplish his goals, must show that he can get the North Koreans to go far beyond the agreement his predecessor once-removed, John Kerry, achieved in negotiations with Iran,” David Sanger writes in today’s New York Times. “The president regularly calls Iran a major nuclear threat, even though it no longer has enough fuel to make a single nuclear weapon. Under the 2015 agreement, it shipped 97 percent of its nuclear material out of the country. And it never possessed nuclear weapons. Yet Mr. Trump pulled out after concluding that the United States gave away too much in return for an agreement that would gradually allow the Iranians to resume production around 2030. The stark contrast between how Mr. Trump talks about Tehran, while insisting that the North is ‘no longer a nuclear threat,’ will become harder and harder to sustain if Mr. Pompeo cannot get Mr. Kim on a rapid denuclearization schedule.”

## 7) Trump does not prioritize historic alliances.

It got lost last Friday night, but the U.S. ambassador to Estonia — a career diplomat who has been in the Foreign Service for 33 years — announced his resignation to protest Trump’s attacks on U.S. allies in Europe.

“A Foreign Service Officer’s DNA is programmed to support policy and we’re schooled right from the start, that if there ever comes a point where one can no longer do so, particularly if one is in a position of leadership, the honorable course is to resign. Having served under six presidents and 11 secretaries of state, I never really thought it would reach that point for me,” James D. Melville Jr., who has been ambassador to Estonia since 2015, wrote in a note to friends that was obtained by Foreign Policy.

“For the President to say the EU was ‘set up to take advantage of the United States, to attack our piggy bank,’ or that ‘NATO is as bad as NAFTA’ is not only factually wrong, but proves to me that it’s time to go,” Melville wrote, adding that he believes in his “marrow” that the U.S. should support the European Union and NATO. “I leave willingly and with deep gratitude for being able to serve my nation with integrity for many years, and with great confidence that America, which is and has always been, great, will someday return to being right.”

“The post surprised several State Department officials who worked with Melville, describing him as a consummate professional who never let domestic politics impact his job,” Robbie Gramer noted. “It means a lot when someone whose had it all in their career just says, ‘I can’t do this any longer,’” one senior State Department official told Foreign Policy. “I just wonder who’s next.”

## 8) Trump’s willingness to start unnecessary fights strains the Western alliance.

The presidency has a proven tendency to pick at old scabs. Here’s a small, but telling, illustration: “A little-known cross-border dispute that has simmered between Canada and the United States since the late 1700s is now approaching the boiling point,” the Toronto Star reported yesterday. “In the past two weeks, at least 10 Canadian fishing boats from New Brunswick have been intercepted by U.S. Border Patrol agents while fishing in the disputed waters around Machias Seal Island, a spokesperson for the fishermen says.”

## 9) Trump doesn’t appear to think through the second- and third- order reverberations of his decisions.

“U.S. companies in China think the government is already messing with them,” Danielle Paquette reports from Beijing. “An American company that ships cherries to a coastal province in southeast China recently encountered a new hurdle at the border: Customs officers ordered a load into quarantine for a week, so it spoiled and was sent back to the United States. American pet-food makers, meanwhile, say they’re facing more rigorous inspections at ports, which delay goods from reaching shelves and ultimately hurt sales. And a U.S. manufacturer that exports vehicles to China recorded a 98 percent jump in random border inspections over the past month, throwing the firm behind schedule. American business leaders fear these are the ‘qualitative measures’ China warned it would unleash if Trump imposed tariffs on its exports to the United States. Just days before the first 25 percent levy is slated to hit $34 billion in Chinese products, U.S. companies here say they’re already feeling the sting in the form of stalled product approvals, worker visas and licensing applications …

“Executives across industries have raised concerns about an increasingly hostile regulatory environment,” Danielle adds. “They also worry the sparring between Washington and Beijing could fuel anti-American sentiment among Chinese consumers. One sign of fraying relations: a notice posted by the Chinese Embassy in Washington last week, urging tourists to ‘avoid going out alone at night’ in the United States, where cases of ‘shootings, robberies, and theft are frequent.’”

## 10) Trump thrives on a level of uncertainty that the world order struggles to deal with.

Trump’s scattershot approach threatens to undermine the very industries he pledged to protect during the campaign. “If nothing else, experts say, the unpredictability of many of Mr. Trump’s proposals — the lack of clarity on when or how Nafta might be renegotiated; the risk of potential litigation over his rollback of auto-pollution rules; the ways in which other countries might retaliate against Mr. Trump’s tariffs — seeds confusion across the American economy, making it tough for businesses to plan effectively for the future,” Coral Davenport and Ana Swanson report in today’s New York Times. “Automakers, for instance, had sought looser emissions rules. However, Mr. Trump’s proposed rollback goes further than expected, and now automakers say it could ultimately spawn years of legal battles and perhaps even subject the industry to more regulations, not fewer, if individual states start enforcing their own, separate rules.”

# Trump says he accepts U.S. intelligence on Russian interference in 2016 election but denies collusion

Trump says he accepts U.S. intelligence and misspoke in Helsinki

By John Wagner and Felicia Sonmez

July 17, 2018

The Washington Post

Seeking to quell **mounting criticism** after the Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Trump on Tuesday said **he accepts the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia sought to influence the 2016 election.**

But Trump also floated without evidence the possibility that other actors may have been involved, a conclusion that is not backed up by the findings of U.S. intelligence agencies.

“I accept our intelligence community’s conclusion that Russia’s meddling in the 2016 election took place. **Could be other people also**. A lot of people out there,” Trump said, reading mostly off a sheet of paper, before a meeting with Republican members of Congress at the White House.

“**There was no collusion at all,**” he added, dismissing the notion that his campaign coordinated with Moscow in 2016.

Trump also said **he misspoke** at the joint news conference with Putin on Monday and that he meant to say he didn’t have any reason to doubt Russia interfered in the election.

“The sentence should have been, ‘**I don’t see any reason why it wouldn’t be Russia.’** Sort of a double negative,” Trump told reporters. “So you can put that in, and I think that probably clarifies things pretty good by itself.”

'Patsy,' 'pushover,' 'puppet': Lawmakers' harsh words for Trump

Trump on Tuesday did not address, however, [his assertion](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/07/16/full-text-president-trumps-news-conference-with-russias-putin/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.28b141c847d3) at Monday’s news conference that “I have confidence in both parties” in response to a question about whether he believed Putin’s denial or the intelligence committee’s conclusion about Russia’s interference in the election.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) immediately seized on Trump’s remarks, saying the president “tried to squirm away from what he said yesterday.”

“It’s twenty-four hours too late, and in the wrong place,” Schumer [said in a tweet](https://twitter.com/senschumer/status/1019302714239586307?s=21).

Trump’s remarks followed a morning tweet in which he blamed the media for negative coverage of Monday’s news conference and said that his meeting with Putin had gone “even better” than a meeting with NATO allies the week before.

“While I had a **great meeting with NATO,** raising vast amounts of money, I had an **even better meeting with Vladimir Putin** of Russia,” Trump wrote, referring to his efforts to increase defense spending by U.S. allies. “Sadly, it is not being reported that way - the Fake News is going Crazy!”

McConnell: 'Russia is not our friend'

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) voiced his support for the NATO alliance and criticized Russian interference in the 2016 election. (The Washington Post)

**[Donald J. Trump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)** [✔@realDonaldTrump:](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) While I had a great meeting with NATO, raising vast amounts of money, I had an even better meeting with Vladimir Putin of Russia. Sadly, it is not being reported that way - the Fake News is going Crazy!

[7:22 AM - Jul 17, 2018](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1019225830298456066)

During a remarkable 46-minute joint news conference at the end of Monday’s summit in Helsinki, Trump would not challenge Putin’s claim that his government played no role in trying to sabotage the U.S. election in 2016, despite [the indictment Friday](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/07/13/6-questions-from-the-indictment-of-12-russians-for-hacking/?utm_term=.dffa5cae7d7c)of 12 Russian intelligence officers, stemming from special counsel Robert S. Mueller III’s investigation of election meddling.

Trump’s performance prompted a **wave of condemnation**, including from many in his own party. On Tuesday, a growing number of Republicans called for him to take swift action to embrace the U.S. intelligence community’s findings about Russian interference and limit the damage from Helsinki.

Speaking with reporters outside the Senate chamber, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) did not mention Trump by name but sought to reassure allies in Europe that the United States stands with them and warned that Russian interference better not happen again.

“We believe the European Union countries are our friends and the Russians are not. They’ve demonstrated that in all the obvious ways over the last few years with the annexation of Crimea, the invasion of eastern Ukraine, not to mention the indisputable evidence that they tried to impact the 2016 election,” McConnell said.

Pressed about Trump’s remarks in Helsinki, House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) also declined to criticize the president on Tuesday, focusing his response on Russia and Putin.

“Let me be really clear,” Ryan told reporters at a news conference. “We stand by our NATO allies and all those countries facing Russian aggression.”

The speaker, who put out a statement Monday supporting the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community, reiterated that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election but added that it had no material effect on the results.

Ryan, however, declined to say whether he agreed with Republicans who have called on Trump to clarify his comments.

In one sign of the White House’s attempts to contain the damage from Helsinki, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman Jr. briefed NATO ambassadors on Tuesday in Brussels about the Trump-Putin meeting. NATO diplomats — fresh from being scoured by Trump last week over their lagging defense spending — said they appreciated the gesture.

One senior NATO diplomat said that Huntsman offered no new details about agreements between Trump and Putin beyond what was already publicly announced by the two leaders themselves. But ambassadors still felt it was a conciliatory gesture toward the alliance after Trump’s harsh words last week, the diplomat said.

“They see NATO as an important player,” said the diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal NATO discussions.

On morning television shows and social media, several Trump supporters urged Trump to explain to the nation why he appeared to side with Putin instead of the U.S. intelligence community, which has concluded that Russia was responsible.

“He’s got to speak out about it, and he’s got to reverse course immediately,” former White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci said during an appearance on CNN. “The optics of this situation are a disaster. . . . If he doesn’t reverse course on this, he will eventually lose people who want to support him.”

Scaramucci, who said he still considers himself loyal to Trump, recommended that the president huddle with “his smartest, most loyal aides” and craft a statement making clear he understands there was Russian interference in the election.

Trump could do that while continuing to insist there was no collusion between the Russians and his campaign, Scaramucci said.

Democrats, meanwhile, sought to capitalize on the outcry over Trump’s performance.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Schumer called on the chamber’s Republican leaders to schedule hearings on what occurred in Helsinki.

“Our Republican colleagues cannot just go, ‘tsk-tsk-tsk,’” Schumer said. “They need to act.”

Schumer said he was particularly concerned about what Trump might have said to Putin during a closed-door, two-hour meeting between the two at which only their interpreters were present.

“The American people deserve to know what’s happened. Our security is at risk,” Schumer said.

In a letter to colleagues, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) outlined several steps by the party to draw attention to Trump’s meeting with Putin.

“Yesterday, President Trump cowered before President Putin, and engaged in a dangerous, disgraceful and damaging show of his Blame America First policy,” she wrote. “His total weakness in the presence of Putin proves that the Russians have something on the president, personally, financially or politically.”

Pelosi said Democrats would introduce a resolution based on Ryan’s statement Monday backing the U.S. intelligence findings and would seek to force a vote to increase funds for election security.

The Democratic National Committee, meanwhile, sought to capitalize on the episode by sending out a fundraising solicitation asking for donations to help elect Democrats “who will hold this reckless president accountable.”

Around 9 a.m. Tuesday, Trump tweeted about the summit for the first time since his return to Washington the night before. He thanked Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), one of the few prominent Republicans who have defended his performance at Monday’s news conference.

Earlier in the morning, Paul defended Trump on CBS, saying he has been the focus of a “partisan investigation” over Russia and is “sensitive to that.”

**Other Republicans weren’t as forgiving.**

“It was a really bad day for the president,” Rep. **Adam Kinzinger** (R-Ill.) said Tuesday morning on CNN. “I think President Trump was wrong yesterday in a major way, and I think it was a very embarrassing press conference.” Kinzinger said Trump needed to speak to the nation about what happened — in person and not on Twitter. “You need to come out today and very much clarify this,” he said.

Kinzinger’s pleading echoed former House speaker **Newt Gingrich,** a Republican who typically defends Trump. “President Trump must clarify his statements in Helsinki on our intelligence system and Putin,” Gingrich tweeted on Monday. “It is the most serious mistake of his presidency and must be corrected — immediately.”

Rep. **Matt Gaetz (**R-Fla.), whom Trump recently endorsed for reelection, was asked during an appearance on Fox News’s “Fox & Friends” on Tuesday whether he thinks Trump should clarify his comments at the news conference. “I look for the president to maybe illuminate a little further the progress that was made in the closed-door session,” Gaetz said, referring to the Monday meeting between Trump and Putin.

In an earlier tweet Tuesday, Trump took credit for pledges from NATO allies at last week’s summit in Brussels to meet their targets for defense spending — a move he said was “bad for Russia.”

**[Donald J. Trump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)** [✔@realDonaldTrump:](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump) I had a great meeting with NATO. They have paid $33 Billion more and will pay hundreds of Billions of Dollars more in the future, only because of me. NATO was weak, but now it is strong again (bad for Russia). The media only says I was rude to leaders, never mentions the money!

[6:53 AM - Jul 17, 2018](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1019218575691837443)

At a news conference following the NATO summit last week, the president claimed that alliance members had agreed to “[substantially up their commitment](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/trump-upends-nato-summit-demanding-immediate-spending-increases-or-he-willdo-his-own-thing/2018/07/12/a3818cc6-7f0a-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5_story.html?utm_term=.63db9d24504e) . . . at levels that they’ve never thought of before.” However, other NATO leaders disputed Trump’s assertions, saying they had merely agreed to meet previous commitments.

While Trump characterized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization gathering as positive, several U.S. allies were offended by his brusque manner. At the outset of the summit, Trump claimed that a natural gas pipeline deal had left Germany “totally controlled” and “captive to Russia” as he levied fresh accusations about “delinquent” defense spending by allies.

**Michael Birnbaum in Brussels contributed to this report.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Trump Losing Allies  |  | | --- | | By Amber PhillipsAugust 24, 2018The Washington Post | | In one week, President Trump lost or came dangerously close to losing four of his most loyal allies. T**hree people have switched sides** completely, which could mean more political and legal trouble for the president is coming.  Here’s a rundown of the latest Trump allies to flip against the man they once fiercely protected, in efforts to protect themselves from legal repercussions over the fallout of illegal hush-money payments to women alleging past affairs with the president. The latest flippers are ranked in order of potentially least to most troubling for Trump. |  |  | | --- | | **3. Michael Cohen** |  |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | **Who he is:** Trump’s former lawyer and longtime fixer. He swore in court this week that he **paid a porn star to stay quiet** about her alleged affair with Trump and helped bury another story from a former **Playboy model**, admitting the way he went about it **violated federal campaign finance laws.** |  |  | | --- | | **What else he might know:** Cohen’s lawyer dangled tantalizing details about Trump potentially knowing something about hacking during the campaign. But it’s possible Cohen may have already given the most damaging information possible about Trump: While breaking the law to keep women quiet, Cohen says **he did it at the direction of Trump.** |  |  | | --- | | **2. David Pecker** |  |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | **Who he is:** The publisher of the supermarket tabloid **National Enquirer** and a longtime friend of Trump’s. On Thursday, the Wall Street Journal reported that he has been **granted immunity** by prosecutors in New York to share what he knows about the hush money deals. |  |  | | --- | | **What he could know:** Potentially a lot. Pecker is alleged, by Cohen, to have bought the rights to former Playboy Playmate Karen McDougal’s story alleging an affair with Trump, then never ran it. That’s not illegal per se, but the way the payment allegedly happened — from a company to help Trump win the election — would amount to an illegal campaign contribution.  There could be more. [Court documents](https://s2.washingtonpost.com/95e3e9/5b805ce6fe1ff65504e621cd/bWFydHloaXR0QGdtYWlsLmNvbQ%3D%3D/5/49/5a6acb4d5e6c70a736848fafa90a2ef7) in Cohen's case say he and Pecker worked together to bury other negative stories about Trump. The question is: What? And how? And what can Pecker share about whether Trump orchestrated any of the hush money? | |
| |  | | --- | | **1. Allen Weisselberg** |  |  | | --- | |  | | Who is Allen Weisselberg? |  |  | | --- | | **Who he is:** The top financial official for the **Trump Organization.** Weisselberg is more than just a business executive in Trump world. He’s been in charge of the company’s and even **Trump’s personal finances** for years. He’s worked with the Trump family since the 1970s. Like Pecker, he too, has been **granted immunity** to share what he knows about the hush-money deals. |  |  | | --- | | **What he could know:** Weisselberg may be the cog that made the whole hush-money machine work. According to court documents in the Cohen case, he approved reimbursing Cohen, listing the payment as a legal retainer in the bookkeeping, even though Cohen didn’t have a retainer. ([The Post reports](https://s2.washingtonpost.com/95e3eb/5b805ce6fe1ff65504e621cd/bWFydHloaXR0QGdtYWlsLmNvbQ%3D%3D/10/49/5a6acb4d5e6c70a736848fafa90a2ef7) Weisselberg did not know what the money was for.)  But Weisselberg may know what a lot of other payments were for, [as The Fix’s Aaron Blake explains](https://s2.washingtonpost.com/95e3ec/5b805ce6fe1ff65504e621cd/bWFydHloaXR0QGdtYWlsLmNvbQ%3D%3D/11/49/5a6acb4d5e6c70a736848fafa90a2ef7). He’s the guy who for years has approved the outflow and inflow of the Trump Organization. “He knows where all the bodies are buried,” one Trump Organization employee [told](https://s2.washingtonpost.com/95e3ed/5b805ce6fe1ff65504e621cd/bWFydHloaXR0QGdtYWlsLmNvbQ%3D%3D/12/49/5a6acb4d5e6c70a736848fafa90a2ef7) The Post’s Philip Rucker. |  |  | | --- | |  | | In other words, the Trump Organization money man could be a potential gold mine for prosecutors who suspect wrongdoing. | | **The fourth ally who turned away from Trump this week: Attorney General Jeff Sessions** |  |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | *"While I am Attorney General, the actions of the Department of Justice will not be improperly influenced by political considerations.”* — Jeff Sessions on Thursday  Daaang. Sessions’s statement is the bureaucratic equivalent of him declaring he’s fed up with the president.  **Trump attacked Sessions** (again) after Cohen and his former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, were convicted Tuesday. It’s clear Trump blames Sessions for all his legal problems, since Sessions’s recusal from overseeing the Russian election interference investigation allowed special counsel Robert S. Mueller III to carry out his investigation unhindered.  If Sessions was hoping the Trump storm would blow over, this seems to be the week he realized that’s a lost cause.  That his breaking point comes on the same week that three other people in Trump’s orbit ditched the president is probably not a coincidence. | |

# The Summer of Trump: Here Are All the Terrifying Stories We Wish we Could Forget

***It’s safe to say the news has not been quiet this summer.***

*By Andrew O’Hehir/Salon*

*September 3, 2018*

This was the summer that began with Rudy Giuliani getting booed at Yankee Stadium — for any longtime New Yorker, a nearly unbelievable event — and ended with a white Republican congressman sorta, kinda calling a black Democratic mayor a “monkey” on live TV. If you have entirely forgotten both events, or never noticed them in the first place, you are not alone.

I’ve been working in and around the news business for exactly 30 years, and the truism used to be that nothing much happened during the summer, except in presidential election years. Even then, the mud-slinging, attack ads and earnest campaign lies didn’t commence in earnest until after Labor Day. Oh, there were stories of sorts: Heat waves, natural disasters, blockbuster movies, peculiar pop songs that dominated the airwaves for weeks at a time. Some surfer somewhere in the world would get nibbled by a great white shark — or possibly just see one — and the news magazines would announce an existential attack on the human species.

Donald Trump has an obsession with sharks, according to one of his (alleged) extramarital sexual partners. I could spend several hundred words trying to decode that (which is admittedly my usual mode) but let’s not. It’s the laziest holiday weekend of all, at the end of a hot, wet and exhausting American summer. I think it’s safe to say the news has not been quiet. We need a break.

Our third summer under Donald Trump, the God-Emperor of All Media, was even crazier than the first two. If that’s possible. You probably remember some of this summer’s major Trumpian news events — the summit in Singapore, the summit in Helsinki, the “family separation” policy, the Paul Manafort verdict and the Michael Cohen plea deal — but pause just a moment to reflect that all that, and much more, unfolded within the last 10 or 12 weeks. And there’s a lot more stuff, I promise, that under another president or in another universe would have seemed like a big deal which you probably don’t remember at all.

Just to honor the scale of the madness, I offer the following highly selective guide to the summer of 2018, and its cascade of News You Can’t Use, or even understand. It may, I suppose, offer some illumination to try to consider these pseudo-events as part of a pattern, but I’m honestly not going to do that right now. (A not to the detail-oriented, including my teenage son: I’m aware that summer did not technically begin until June 21, and won’t end for another three weeks. We’re dealing with convention here, not the solar calendar.)

Let’s roll back the calendar to the distant era known as Memorial Day, when no one outside my little corner of the east Bronx (OK, and northern Queens) had ever heard of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “Roseanne” was the hottest show on network TV, John Brennan still had a security clearance and we all assumed we could safely delete the name “Omarosa” from our collective memory.

[**Rudy Giuliani booed at Yankee Stadium**](https://www.salon.com/2018/05/28/rudy-giuliani-booed-at-yankee-stadium-sparks-question-where-is-trump-going-to-live-post-presidency/)

You have to understand why this was so weird, from the NYC perspective. Traditionally, the Yankees have an extremely white, suburban and conservative fan base — exactly the New Yorkers who loved Rudy when he was mayor and are the most likely to be Trump-friendly. (If you actually live in the city and are a leftist or liberal, you’re likely to be a Mets fan.) That dynamic has shifted some in recent years, partly because the Yanks haven’t dominated the baseball universe the way they once did. But this had to be a stinging rejection for the president’s lawyer, from what he would have assumed was his core demographic.

**Roseanne Barr**[**called Valerie Jarrett an ape**](https://www.salon.com/2018/05/29/abc-cancels-rosanne-revival-hours-after-the-comedians-racist-tweets/)**, apparently ending Barr’s checkered showbiz career**

This one was kind of strange too, in that Roseanne has been a full-on member of the boiled-owl moonbat right for years now, and has repeatedly retweeted or endorsed crazy conspiracy theories of the #Pizzagate variety. Why an ordinary racist insult was worse than making grandiose claims about George Soros, Hillary Clinton and their links to child sex trafficking is a mystery.

[**GOP congresswoman ignores guns, blames porn for school shootings**](https://www.salon.com/2018/05/29/gop-congresswoman-ignores-guns-blames-porn-for-school-shootings/)

Rep. Diane Black, a Tennessee Republican, said that “a big part of the root cause” behind the epidemic of school shootings was the widespread availability of porn. She did not elaborate on how one leads to the other, but this is now a central right-wing tactic, as Salon’s Amanda Marcotte has repeatedly explored: Suggest some bizarre and irrelevant connection, with no evidence, that may enable those who wish to ignore the obvious to do so.

[**Trump's double standard: White Indiana hero awesome; black Nashville hero ignored**](https://www.salon.com/2018/05/30/trump-praised-white-man-who-saved-lives-in-indiana-ignored-black-man-who-did-the-same-in-nashville/)

Further exercises in obviousness: The president lavished praise on a white man who stopped a potential mass shooter in Indiana, while the black man who shut down an apparent racist or white supremacist attacker at a Waffle House in Nashville was acknowledged only briefly and begrudgingly.

[**Samantha Bee blasts "feckless c\*\*t'" Ivanka Trump**](https://www.salon.com/2018/05/31/samantha-bee-draws-cries-of-a-liberal-double-standard-after-blasting-feckless-ct-ivanka-trump/)

This happened the same week as the Roseanne story. I guess it’s fair to observe that Bee shouldn’t have used that language, since it distracted everyone from the point she was trying to make. I’m also not sure she used “feckless” correctly.

**JUNE**

[**Trump and allies push another elaborate conspiracy theory no one can understand**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/01/spygates-a-big-bust-but-donald-trump-still-hates-jeff-sessions-this-week-in-confusing-russia-news/)

Does anyone actually remember what “Spygate” was supposed to be, or how it supposedly proved that there was a massive Deep State conspiracy to stop or overthrow Trump? To be fair, it’s hilarious that so many liberals are suddenly big fans of the FBI and the entire national-security apparatus, and even if none of the right-wing counter-theories is individually comprehensible, they have succeeded in creating a penumbra of doubt that sustains Trump’s true believers.

[**John Boehner gets real about the Trump takeover of GOP: "There is no Republican Party"**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/01/john-boehner-gets-real-about-the-total-trump-takeover-of-gop-there-is-no-republican-party/)

Not trying to whitewash the dude, who was a total obstructionist as House speaker. Frankly, we should all be grateful he never reached a “grand bargain” with Barack Obama on spending and Social Security. But it’s striking how much Boehner’s brand of country-club, Chamber of Commerce Republicanism is now an artifact of the past.

[**Kim Jong-un sends Donald Trump a letter in an oversized envelope**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/02/kim-jong-un-sent-a-personal-letter-to-donald-trump-and-it-was-literally-huge/)

We actually spent time wondering whether he was calling attention to the president’s tiny hands.

[**EPA chief Scott Pruitt allegedly asked aide to buy an "old mattress" from a Trump hotel**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/04/epa-administrator-scott-pruitt-allegedly-asked-his-aide-to-buy-an-old-mattress-from-a-trump-hotel/)

I get that Pruitt was trying to live in D.C on effectively nothing, empowered by the Republican version of “freecycling.” But WTF? Was this a sex thing? A religious-shrine thing? A puckish reference to what supposedly occurs in the supposed “pee tape”? Highly-rated mattresses from Amazon just aren’t that expensive, Scott. This didn’t make sense.

[**Trump cancels Philadelphia Eagles’ White House visit**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/05/president-donald-trump-cancels-the-eagles-white-house-visit-after-receiving-only-a-handful-of-rsvps/)

I mean, it definitely would have been awkward, given the president’s suggestion that black NFL players (a large majority of the Eagles, and the entire league) who kneel during the national anthem should be fired or deported or perhaps water-boarded for exercising their First Amendment rights. But I’m pretty sure there’s been no other recent occasion when the Super Bowl winners and the president overtly shunned each other.

[**Trump holds summit with Kim Jong-un in Singapore**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/12/donald-trump-and-kim-jong-uns-nothing-summit-he-went-to-singapore-for-a-giant-photo-op/)

Considering what happened later in Helsinki, this was close to the biggest non-event of the summer. That’s without even getting into how meaningless it was, and the debates about whether or not Trump got played.

[**Donald Trump Jr. admits to "Fox & Friends" that his dad is running a "cult" – and it is "winning"**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/14/14899459_partner/)

Two reactions to this: Don Junior’s not wrong, but to coin a phrase, I don’t think that word means what he thinks it means. (Bob Avakian, longtime leader of the Revolutionary Communist Party, also gleefully says he is running a “cult.” In all seriousness and politics aside, he and Trump would kinda dig each other.)

[**Trump says he wants to be like Kim Jong-un: "I want my people" to "sit up at attention"**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/15/trump-says-he-wants-to-be-like-kim-jong-un-i-want-my-people-to-sit-up-at-attention/)

Say that it would be cool to be a dictator and a lot more would get done if so-called democracy didn’t get in the way. Then claim you were joking. Repeat.

[**Ann Coulter criticizes her own party, claiming to "be done" with Republicans**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/20/ann-coulter-criticizes-her-own-party-claiming-to-be-done-with-republicans_partner/)

Fake news!

**As family separation policy goes into effect on the border,**[**Jeff Sessions quotes Bible passages**](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/15/stephen-colbert-rips-into-jeff-sessions-for-using-bible-to-justify-separating-immigrant-families/)**to justify it**

There was definitely a constituency that simply *loved* this policy. Apparently the administration miscalculated how large that constituency was.

[**Melania Trump's border fashion controversy: “I really don't care, do u?”**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/21/melania-trumps-border-fashion-statement-i-really-dont-care-do-u/)

Maybe we misunderstood her! Maybe Melania’s bizarre discount-store jacket was meant as a rebuke to conservative critics! But I really don’t care do u?

[**In 5-4 ruling, Supreme Court sides with Trump administration on travel ban**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/26/supreme-court-rules-in-favor-of-trumps-travel-ban/)

This one really confused me, both at the time and now: Wasn’t the travel ban supposed to expire anyway? So there is one now? Is it being enforced? Media and Democrats immediately moved on, and this was in the middle of the border crisis. So who knows?

[**Sean Spicer is developing a talk show: "Sean Spicer's Common Ground"**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/06/26/sean-spicer-is-developing-a-talk-show-sean-spicers-common-ground/)

Fake news!

[**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/04/is-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-too-far-left-for-america-absolutely-not/)**defeats Rep. Joe Crowley in Democratic primary**

Seismic event or low-turnout fluke? Honestly, some of both. But this made clear that the internal frictions within the Democratic Party hadn’t gone away after 2016, and that the usual party cant about unifying to win the election and setting aside these petty differences for now wasn’t going to wash.

**Abolish ICE becomes almost a mainstream issue**

Most Democrats are still terrified of this one, which was completely on the fringe before Ocasi-Cortez. But in certain districts, for certain progressives, it’s clearly a winner.

[**Andres Manuel López Obrador elected to Mexican presidency in landslide**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/02/populist-candidate-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-elected-to-mexican-presidency-in-landslide/)

If these things go in international waves, as is often the case, then the veteran leftist’s sweeping victory south of the border could be a leading indicator of a pretty big shift this November. I suspect there’s a knife-edge balance between Republicans (barely) holding the House and Democrats winning a 30-to-40-seat majority.

**Rep. Jim Jordan**[**implicated in sex-abuse scandal**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/13/republicans-rally-around-jim-jordan-sex-abuse-scandal-is-work-of-the-deep-state/)**, runs for speaker anyway**

Ohio Freedom Caucus king says he never heard about widespread sexual abuse of Ohio State wrestlers by the team doctor when he was a coach there. Or maybe he heard about it and thought, whatever, a little masturbation on the exam table, who hasn’t done that. Anyway it was the Deep State! Numerous former wrestlers (some of whom say they are Republicans) have now said Jordan knew about it and did nothing. Hasn’t hurt him at all.

**Justice Anthony Kennedy retires, Trump nominates Brett Kavanaugh**

It’s boring that we have to go through the ritual of pretending that Kavanaugh might be stopped. Although I have to say that his pretense of being a neutral or moderate judicial arbiter is a lot worse than Neil Gorsuch’s. It likely doesn’t matter.

**Mitch McConnell gets hassled**[**going out to dinner**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/07/protestors-swarm-mitch-mcconnell-as-he-leaves-louisville-restaurant/)**(**[**and lunch**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/10/protesters-confront-mitch-mcconnell-at-louisville-restaurant-for-second-day-running/)**!) in Louisville**

One of the events — well, two of them — that launched the great “civility” debate of 2018. God help us.

**Trump disrupts NATO meeting in Brussels, then attacks Theresa May in interview with London tabloid**

Seriously, we all forgot about this immediately because Putin. But the Trumpian rift in the Western alliance was unquestionably an important historical event. It sure sounds to me like he’s still taking Steve Bannon’s advice.

**Trump meets Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, is obsequious**

OK, you didn’t forget about this one, or not entirely. But isn’t it striking that without quite ever figuring out what this meant, we’ve all kind of swept it under the carpet? As things look right now, this decidedly strange event will play no significant role in the November midterms.

[**12 Russian intelligence officers indicted by Robert Mueller**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/13/mueller-probe-indicts-12-russian-intelligence-officers-as-trump-meets-with-queen-elizabeth/)

I’m honestly not sure how important this is. As I’ve said several times, if there were any evidence that directly linked Donald Trump to the Russian hacking and disinformation campaigns, we’d have seen it by now.

[**Trump: “I think the European Union is a foe”**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/15/donald-trump-i-think-the-european-union-is-a-foe/)

From his point of view, this is simply true. See above about Steve Bannon, who likely understands that it’s too late to save the Republicans this November, but may believe he can destroy the EU.

**The too-dumb-for-fiction saga of**[**Maria Butina**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/16/who-is-maria-butina-gun-activist-with-ties-to-the-nra-charged-with-operating-as-a-russian-agent/)

Alleged American University student and gun-rights femme fatale with numerous Republican connections is accused of being a Russian spy. This was likely an important development although, again, there appear to be no direct links between her and Trump.

[**Trump revokes former CIA director John Brennan’s security clearance**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/16/trump-digs-himself-into-a-deep-hole-after-revoking-john-brennans-security-clearance/)

Let’s be clear about one thing: Brennan was a key player in the Bush administration’s torture regime, however much he’d like to whitewash that past, and has been something of a troll in his post-CIA media career. This was likely a road test for Trump: How far can he go in silencing his enemies and pardoning all his pals? Results still being analyzed.

[**Melania Trump watches CNN on Air Force One**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/25/melania-will-watch-any-channel-she-wants-first-ladys-office-dismisses-trumps-cnn-tantrum/)**; president pitches a fit**

Is it possible to imagine a universe where this was actually a story? Oh, that’s right, we live in it.

[**Trump’s star on Hollywood Walk of Fame repeatedly vandalized**](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/25/president-donald-trumps-star-on-californias-hollywood-walk-of-fame-has-been-demolished-yet-again/)

Somebody’s going to write an entire dissertation on this. Perhaps one of the students of [disgraced NYU philosopher Avital Ronell](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/18/when-a-woman-is-accused-of-sexual-misconduct-the-strange-case-of-avital-ronell/), if they can keep her at a safe distance.

**Alex Jones & Infowars suspended from social media platforms**

I really don’t feel like writing anything about that guy. Is that OK?

[**Ex-White House official claims Trump scheduled meetings based on what he watched on "Fox & Friends"**](https://www.railrode.net/2018/07/31/ex-white-house-official-claims-trump-scheduled-meetings-based-on-what-he-watched-on-fox-and-friends/)

This was basically something we knew, but sometimes it’s startling to hear such things spelled out.

[**Donald Trump Jr. suggests Democratic platform is "awfully similar" to Nazi Party**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/03/donald-trump-jr-suggests-democratic-national-committee-platform-is-awfully-similar-to-nazi-party/)

Indeed, Don? We await further clarification.

**Omarosa, Omarosa, Omarosa**

Whatever it was she had to say — I've now forgotten about her all over again — we all breathlessly covered it for days.

[**Laura Ingraham laments "demographic changes"**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/09/laura-ingraham-enforces-racist-stereotypes-about-people-of-color-as-she-laments-demographic-changes/)**real Americans don't like, insists she's not a racist**

Then of course she said she had nothing in common with white nationalists, didn’t like them at all.

**Trump promised to win the war in Afghanistan rapidly;**[**it’s going worse than ever**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/17/remember-afghanistan-trumps-strategy-is-failing-badly-as-taliban-gains-ground/)

Of course, two previous presidents have tasted defeat in Afghanistan, as did the Soviet Union and the British Empire before that. Might there be a lesson there somewhere?

**Manafort convicted; Cohen flips,**[**which "ought to be illegal"**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/23/trump-argues-michael-cohens-hush-money-payments-werent-crimes-and-flipping-should-be-outlawed/)

Beginning of the end of the Trump presidency, as many commentators pronounced? Or just a semi-relevant sideshow that illustrates the massive corruption in every enterprise Donald Trump has ever touched.

[**Diamond & Silk attack media as “enemy of the people”**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/17/diamond-and-silk-attack-the-american-media-on-fox-and-friends-they-are-the-enemy-of-the-people/)

That was hurtful.

[**Pat Buchanan says John Brennan "would have been challenged to a duel and shot" by Andrew Jackson**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/17/pat-buchanan-says-john-brennan-would-have-been-challenged-to-a-duel-and-shot-by-richard-nixon/)

I wrote Buchanan an email right after Trump’s election asking him to comment, and I told him I had been present in Houston for his famous “culture war” speech in 1992. (Which is true.) He declined to discuss Trump on the record, but congratulated me for being a witness to history. Thanks dude!

[**Sen. Bill Nelson claims Russia has hacked Florida's voter registration records: Is it true?**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/21/sen-bill-nelson-claims-russia-has-hacked-floridas-voter-registration-records-is-it-true/)

I’m certainly not a fan of both-sides-ism, but this feels a lot like Democratic fake news. No one in the federal government or in elected office, from either party, has Nelson’s back on this one.

[**Trump goes full white supremacy with South Africa tweet: Does he want a "race war"?**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/24/trump-goes-full-white-supremacy-with-south-africa-tweet-does-he-want-a-race-war/)

I mean, he doesn’t want to call it a "race war" as such. And it might be more accurate to say that he thinks there’s already a race war and that black people started it. He definitely still thinks the [Central Park Five were guilty](https://www.salon.com/2018/06/23/is-donald-trump-a-liar-maybe-not-and-thats-when-it-really-gets-scary/), by the way.

**Trump vows or threatens to fire Jeff Sessions, for about the 11th time**

Any compassion for Sessions is misplaced, but his must be a truly miserable life

**John McCain dies; White House flag goes up, down and then up again**

No comment required.

**Black progressive wins Florida primary,**[**gets tagged with “monkey” slur by opponent**](https://www.salon.com/2018/08/31/ron-desantis-and-the-monkey-comment-heres-why-conscious-intent-doesnt-matter/)

No, Rep. Ron DeSantis didn’t literally call Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum a monkey, and quite likely had no racist intent. That doesn’t much matter.

How much does any of this matter? Let’s leave all such questions for after the holiday. Fire up the BBQ or get to the beach. Hey, they also found a [lake on Mars this summer,](https://www.salon.com/2018/07/26/martian-lake-discovery-doesnt-mean-you-should-get-excited-about-life-on-mars-scientists-caution/) raising the probability of life on that planet by about a million percent. I know where next year’s Labor Day beach party is happening.

# I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration

September 5, 2018

The Times today is taking the rare step of publishing an anonymous Op-Ed essay. We have done so at the request of the author, a senior official in the Trump administration whose identity is known to us and whose job would be jeopardized by its disclosure. We believe publishing this essay anonymously is the only way to deliver an important perspective to our readers.

**Opinion Column in New York Times**

President Trump is facing a test to his presidency unlike any faced by a modern American leader.

It’s not just that the special counsel looms large. Or that the country is bitterly divided over Mr. Trump’s leadership. Or even that his party might well lose the House to an opposition hellbent on his downfall.

The dilemma — which he does not fully grasp — is that **many of the senior officials in his own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations.**

I would know. I am one of them.

To be clear, ours is not the popular “resistance” of the left. We want the administration to succeed and think that many of its policies have already made America safer and more prosperous.

But we believe our first duty is to this country, and the president continues to act in a manner that is **detrimental to the health of our republic.**

That is why many Trump appointees have [vowed to do what we can](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/us/politics/woodward-trump-book-fear.html?module=Uisil) to preserve our democratic institutions **while thwarting Mr. Trump’s more misguided impulses until he is out of office**.

The root of the problem is the president’s **amorality**. Anyone who works with him knows he is not moored to any discernible first principles that guide his decision making.

Although he was elected as a Republican, the president shows little affinity for ideals long espoused by conservatives: **free minds, free markets and free people.** At best, he has invoked these ideals in scripted settings. At worst, he has attacked them outright.

In addition to his mass-marketing of the notion that the press is the “enemy of the people,” President Trump’s impulses are generally anti-trade and anti-democratic.

Don’t get me wrong. There are bright spots that the near-ceaseless negative coverage of the administration fails to capture: effective deregulation, historic tax reform, a more robust military and more.

But these successes have come despite — not because of — the president’s leadership style, which is **impetuous, adversarial, petty and ineffective.**

From the White House to executive branch departments and agencies, senior officials will privately admit their daily disbelief at the commander in chief’s comments and actions. Most are working to **insulate their operations from his whims.**

Meetings with him **veer off topic and off the rails**, he engages in repetitive rants, and his impulsiveness results in **half-baked, ill-informed and occasionally reckless decisions that have to be walked back.**

“There is literally no telling whether he might change his mind from one minute to the next,” a top official complained to me recently, exasperated by an Oval Office meeting at which the president flip-flopped on a major policy decision he’d made only a week earlier.

The **erratic behavior** would be more concerning if it weren’t for unsung heroes in and around the White House. Some of his aides have been cast as villains by the media. But in private, they have gone to great lengths to keep bad decisions contained to the West Wing, though they are clearly not always successful.

It may be cold comfort in this chaotic era, but Americans should know that there are adults in the room. We fully recognize what is happening. And we are trying to do what’s right even when Donald Trump won’t.

The result is a **two-track presidency.**

Take foreign policy: In public and in private, President Trump shows a **preference for autocrats and dictators**, such as President Vladimir Putin of Russia and North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-un, and displays little genuine appreciation for the ties that bind us to allied, like-minded nations.

Astute observers have noted, though, that the rest of the administration is operating on another track, one where countries like Russia are called out for meddling and punished accordingly, and where allies around the world are engaged as peers rather than ridiculed as rivals.

On Russia, for instance, the president was reluctant [to expel](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/world/europe/trump-russia-diplomats-expulsion.html) so many of Mr. Putin’s spies as punishment for the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain. He complained for weeks about senior staff members letting him get boxed into further confrontation with Russia, and he expressed frustration that the United States continued to impose sanctions on the country for its malign behavior. But his national security team knew better — such actions had to be taken, to hold Moscow accountable.

**This isn’t the work of the so-called deep state. It’s the work of the steady state.**

Given the instability many witnessed, there were early whispers within the cabinet of invoking the 25th Amendment, which would start a complex process for removing the president. But no one wanted to precipitate a constitutional crisis. So we will do what we can to steer the administration in the right direction until — one way or another — it’s over.

The bigger concern is not what Mr. Trump has done to the presidency but rather **what we as a nation have allowed him to do to us**. We have sunk low with him and allowed our discourse to be stripped of civility.

Senator John McCain put it best in his [farewell letter](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/27/us/politics/john-mccain-farewell-statement.html). All Americans should heed his words and break free of the tribalism trap, with the high aim of uniting through our shared values and love of this great nation.

We may no longer have Senator McCain. But we will always have his example — a lodestar for restoring honor to public life and our national dialogue. Mr. Trump may fear such honorable men, but we should revere them.

There is a quiet resistance within the administration of people choosing to put country first. But the real difference will be made by everyday citizens rising above politics, reaching across the aisle and resolving to shed the labels in favor of a single one: Americans.

**The writer is a senior official in the Trump administration.**

# Fear - Attack on the Trump Regime from an Establishment Point of View

By Martin Hittelman

Fear

Trump in the White House

Woodward, Bob. Fear: Trump in the White House. Simon & Schuster.

By Bob Woodward

Woodward, Bob. Fear: Trump in the White House (pp. 219-220). Simon & Schuster. Kindle Edition.

Bob Woodward’s short book on the Trump White House is an exposure of how the White House operates under the Trump Regime. It is a conservative attack on the wild and crazy president. A basic premise is that the United States has been a country that is saving the world from tyrants, when in reality the United States international goal has been to make the world safe for American capital. This premise is never under question. “The great gift of the greatest generation to us,” Mattis opened, “is the rules-based, international democratic order.” This global architecture brought security, stability and prosperity. **The question of who it brought this security, stability, and prosperity to is never addressed.**

The basic thrust of the book is that Trump threatens to disrupt the U.S. system of international order by upsetting negotiated treaties and security agreements. Trump speaks to a public that does not agree with international involvements and exclusively supports an American First approach to everything.

An underlying theme is that Trump is, without a doubt, uninterested in data that does not support his politically motivated statements. His rhetoric includes the need to have other countries pay the bills for their defense systems that are now supported with United States money and military forces. Woodward is not clear on whether Trump believes everything he tweets or that he tweets just excite and unite his followers.

In any case, the book does illustrate the fact that Trump is a compulsive liar. It also makes clear that the Trump Regime is an operating nightmare. An example: ““I don’t know how much longer I can stay,” Gary Cohn told Porter, “because things are just crazy here. They’re so chaotic. He’s never going to change. **It’s pointless to prepare a meaningful, substantive briefing for the presiden**t that’s organized, where you have a bunch of slides. Because you know he’s never going to listen. We’re never going to get through it. He’s going to get through the first 10 minutes and then he’s going to want to start talking about some other topic. And so, we’re going to be there for an hour, but we’re never going to get through this briefing.” Porter tried to prepare organized briefing papers with relevant information, different viewpoints, costs/benefits, pros and cons and consequences of a decision. It didn’t work.””

**The book’s Prologue says it all:**

“In early September 2017, in the eighth month of the Trump presidency, Gary Cohn, the former president of Goldman Sachs and the president’s top economic adviser in the White House, moved cautiously toward the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. In his 27 years at Goldman, Cohn—6-foot-3, bald, brash and full of self-confidence—had made billions for his clients and hundreds of millions for himself. “

[A description favorable to the competency of Cohn – **the entire book sets out to support the effort of those who want to continue the current U.S. efforts to, dare I say it, rule the world**. MH]

“He had granted himself walk-in privileges to Trump’s Oval Office, and the president had accepted that arrangement. On the desk was a one-page draft letter from the president addressed to the president of South Korea, terminating the United States–Korea Free Trade Agreement, known as KORUS. Cohn was appalled. For months Trump had threatened to withdraw from the agreement, one of the foundations of an economic relationship, a military alliance and, most important, top secret intelligence operations and capabilities. “

[An argument in favor of the status quo imperialistic role of the U.S. in international affairs - MH]

“Under a treaty dating back to the 1950s, the United States stationed 28,500 U.S. troops in the South and operated the most highly classified and sensitive Special Access Programs (SAP), which provided sophisticated Top Secret, codeword intelligence and military capabilities. North Korean ICBM missiles now had the capability to carry a nuclear weapon, perhaps to the American homeland. A missile from North Korea would take 38 minutes to reach Los Angeles. These programs enabled the United States to detect an ICBM launch in North Korea within seven seconds. The equivalent capability in Alaska took 15 minutes—an astonishing time differential. The ability to detect a launch in seven seconds would give the United States military the time to shoot down a North Korean missile. It is perhaps the most important and most secret operation in the United States government. The American presence in South Korea represents the essence of national security. Withdrawal from the KORUS trade agreement, which South Korea deemed essential to its economy, could lead to an unraveling of the entire relationship. “

[Woodward is just making the argument for Cohn and his cronies within and outside the Trump regime - MH]

“Cohn could not believe that President Trump would risk losing vital intelligence assets crucial to U.S. national security. This all stemmed from Trump’s fury that the United States had an $18 billion annual trade deficit with South Korea and was spending $3.5 billion a year to keep U.S. troops there.

Despite almost daily reports of chaos and discord in the White House, the public did not know how bad the internal situation actually was. Trump was always shifting, rarely fixed, erratic. He would get in a bad mood, something large or small would infuriate him, and he would say about the KORUS trade agreement, “We’re withdrawing today.”

“But now there was the letter, dated September 5, 2017, a potential trigger to a national security catastrophe. Cohn was worried Trump would sign the letter if he saw it. Cohn removed the letter draft from the Resolute Desk. He placed it in a blue folder marked “KEEP.” “I stole it off his desk,” he later told an associate. “I wouldn’t let him see it. He’s never going to see that document. Got to protect the country.”

“**In the anarchy and disorder of the White House, and Trump’s mind, t**he president never noticed the missing letter. Ordinarily Rob Porter, the staff secretary and organizer of presidential paperwork, would have been responsible for producing letters like this to the South Korean president. But this time, alarmingly, the letter draft had come to Trump through an unknown channel. Staff secretary is one of the low-profile but critical roles in any White House. For months, Porter had been briefing Trump on decision memos and other presidential documents, including the most sensitive national security authorizations for military and covert CIA activities. Porter, 6-foot-4, rail-thin, 40 years old and raised a Mormon, was one of the gray men: an organization man with little flash who had attended Harvard and Harvard Law School and been a Rhodes Scholar. Porter later discovered there were multiple copies of the draft letter, and either Cohn or he made sure none remained on the president’s desk.“

Cohn and Porter worked together to derail what they believed were Trump’s most impulsive and dangerous orders. That document and others like it just disappeared. When Trump had a draft on his desk to proofread, Cohn at times would just yank it, and the president would forget about it. But if it was on his desk, he’d sign it. “It’s not what we did for the country,” Cohn said privately. “It’s what we saved him from doing.” It was no less than an administrative coup d’état, an undermining of the will of the president of the United States and his constitutional authority. In addition to coordinating policy decisions and schedules and running the paperwork for the president, Porter told an associate, “A third of my job was trying to react to some of the really dangerous ideas that he had and try to give him reasons to believe that maybe they weren’t such good ideas.” Another strategy was to delay, procrastinate, cite legal restrictions. Lawyer Porter said, “But slow-walking things or not taking things up to him, or telling him—rightly, not just as an excuse—but this needs to be vetted, or we need to do more process on this, or we don’t have legal counsel clearance—that happened 10 times more frequently than taking papers from his desk. It felt like we were walking along the edge of the cliff perpetually.” There were days or weeks when the operation seemed under control and they were a couple of steps back from the edge.”

“Other times, we would fall over the edge, and an action would be taken. It was like you were always walking right there on the edge.” Although Trump never mentioned the missing September 5 letter, he did not forget what he wanted to do about the trade agreement. “There were several different iterations of that letter,” Porter told an associate. Later in an Oval Office meeting, the South Korean agreement was being heatedly debated. “I don’t care,” Trump said. “I’m tired of these arguments! I don’t want to hear about it anymore. We’re getting out of KORUS.” He started to dictate a new letter he wanted to send. Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law, took Trump’s words seriously. Jared, 36, was a senior White House adviser and had a self-possessed, almost aristocratic bearing. He had been married to Trump’s daughter Ivanka since 2009. Because he was sitting closest to the president, Jared started writing down what Trump was saying, taking dictation. Finish the letter and get it to me so I can sign it, Trump ordered him. Jared was in the process of turning the president’s dictation into a new letter when Porter heard about it. “Send me the draft,” he told him. “If we’re going to do this, we cannot do it on the back of a napkin. We have to write it up in a way that isn’t going to embarrass us.” Kushner sent down a paper copy of his draft. It was not of much use. Porter and Cohn had something typed up to demonstrate they were doing what the president had asked. Trump was expecting an immediate response. They wouldn’t walk in empty-handed. The draft was part of the subterfuge.”

“At a formal meeting, the opponents of leaving KORUS raised all kinds of arguments—the United States had never withdrawn from a free trade agreement before; there were legal issues, geopolitical issues, vital national security and intelligence issues; the letter wasn’t ready. They smothered the president with facts and logic. “Well, let’s keep working on the letter,” Trump said. “I want to see the next draft.” Cohn and Porter did not prepare a next draft. So, there was nothing to show the president. The issue, for the moment, disappeared in the haze of presidential decision making. Trump got busy with other things. But the KORUS issue would not go away.

“Cohn spoke to Secretary of Defense **James Mattis**, the retired Marine general who was perhaps the most influential voice among Trump’s cabinet and staff. General Mattis, a combat veteran, had served 40 years in the Corps. At 5-foot-9 with ramrod-straight posture, he had a permanently world-weary demeanor. “We’re teetering on the edge,” Cohn told the secretary. “We may need some backup this time.” Mattis tried to limit his visits to the White House and stick to military business as much as possible but realizing the urgency he came to the Oval Office. “Mr. President,” he said, “Kim Jong Un poses the most immediate threat to our national security. We need South Korea as an ally. It may not seem like trade is related to all this, but it’s central.” American military and intelligence assets in South Korea are the backbone of our ability to defend ourselves from North Korea. Please don’t leave the deal. Why is the U.S. paying $1 billion a year for an anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea? Trump asked. He was furious about the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system and had threatened to pull it out of South Korea and move it to Portland, Oregon. “We’re not doing this for South Korea,” Mattis said. “We’re helping South Korea because it helps us.” The president seemed to acquiesce, but only for the moment.”

“In 2016, candidate Trump gave Bob Costa and myself his definition of the job of president: “More than anything else, it’s the security of our nation. . . . That’s number one, two and three. . . . The military, being strong, not letting bad things happen to our country from the outside. And I certainly think that’s always going to be my number-one part of that definition.” The reality was that the United States in 2017 was **tethered to the words and actions of an emotionally overwrought, mercurial and unpredictable leader**. Members of his staff had joined to purposefully block some of what they believed were the president’s most dangerous impulses. It was a nervous breakdown of the executive power of the most powerful country in the world. What follows is that story.”

**And that is about it for entire book**. The rest of the book just goes into the details of the way in which Trump is leading the country into ruin with his stupidity, arrogance, lack of attention to any details, laziness, vindictiveness, and general personality defects.

While Trump is all of the above, that is not proof that the policies of his enemies within his administration are any better than his or that their policies meet the needs of the planet and its inhabitants. **The basic shared beliefs of Trump and his opponents within his administration regarding capitalism, the need for the rich to accumulate their wealth, the need to make the world a safe place for U.S. corporations to operate and exploit the labor and natural resources of other countries, the value of U.S. militarism- and an opposition to social welfare are not questioned in Fear.**

One of the heroes of the Woodward book is retired four-star Marine general Jim, Mad Dog, Mattis. Woodward writes: “As CentCom commander from 2010 to 2013, according to one senior aide, Mattis believed that Iran “remained the greatest threat to the United States interests in the Middle East.” He was concerned that the Israelis were going to strike the Iranian nuclear facilities and pull the United States into the conflict. Mattis also believed the United States did not have enough military force in the region and did not have robust rules of engagement.”

“He wrote a memo to President Obama through Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta seeking more authority to respond to Iranian provocations. He was worried that the Iranians might mine international waters and create an incident at sea that could escalate. Tom Donilon, the national security adviser, answered Mattis. A memo, soon referred to as “the Donilon memo,” directed that under no circumstances would Mattis take any action against Iran for mining international waters unless the mine was effectively dropped in the path of a U.S. warship and presented an imminent danger to the ship. The Donilon memo would be one of the first orders Mattis rescinded when he became secretary of defense. Mattis continued to beat the drum on Iran. He found the war plan for Iran insufficient. It was all aviation dependent; all air power. It did not have a broad joint-force plan. The plan had five strike options—first against small Iranian boats, another against ballistic missiles, another against other weapons systems and another for an invasion. “Strike Option Five” was the plan for destroying the Iranian nuclear program. Mattis wrote a scathing memo to the chief of naval operations saying your Navy is completely unprepared for conflict in the Persian Gulf.”

Mad Dog Mattis is somehow seen by Woodward as a hero in the Trump Whitehouse.

Woodward writes a lot about the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons. He writes nothing about the United States nuclear weapons being a threat to the world. **He does not even suggest that there is something to be said when the head of the country with most of the weapons of mass destruction self-righteously denounces and threatens other countries that are trying to develop their own weapons.** In the historical and current view of the United State government, the only weapons that other countries should possess are those that we sell them.

As an example of Trump and possible war: “President Trump’s tweets may have come close to starting a war with North Korea in early 2018. The public never learned the full story of the risks that Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un took as they engaged in a public battle of words. It began on New Year’s Day in an address by Kim, reminding the world, and the American president, of his nuclear weapons. “It’s not a mere threat but a reality that I have a nuclear button on the desk in my office,” Kim declared. “All of the mainland United States is within the range of our nuclear strike.” It was an ugly and provocative threat.”

Lingering after receiving his President’s Daily Brief on January 2, President Trump said, “In this job I’m playing five hands of poker simultaneously, and right now we’re winning most of the hands. Iran is busting up and the regime is under intense pressure. Pakistan is terrified of losing all of our security aid and reimbursements. And South Korea is going to capitulate to us on trade and talks with North Korea.” He seemed on top of the world but he didn’t mention the fifth poker hand. Real power is fear. The answer on North Korea was to scare Kim Jung Un. “He’s a bully,” Trump told Porter. “He’s a tough guy. The way to deal with those people is by being tough. And I’m going to intimidate him and I’m going to outfox him.” That evening, Trump sent a taunting, mine-is-bigger-than-yours tweet that shook the White House and the diplomatic community: “North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times,” Trump wrote on Twitter at 7:49 p.m. “**Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!**”

**Talk about an ugly and provocative threat.**

**Yuval Noah Harari** observes in Samiens: A Brief History of Humankind that: “Wars are not a pub brawl. They are very complex projects that require extraordinary degrees of organization, cooperation and appeasement. The ability to maintain peace at home, acquire allies abroad, and understand what goes through the minds of other people (particularly your enemies) is usually the key to victory. Hence an aggressive brute is often the worst choice to run a war. Much better is a cooperative person who knows how to appease, how to manipulate and how to see things from different perspectives. This is the stuff empire-builders are made of.” An aggressive brute is also not the best person to run a country (especially if that country has the ability to destroy the earth).

One continuing theme of Fear is that Trump wanted other countries to **pay for the protection that the United States was providing them.** Bannon and others encouraged him to continue that line of thinking while all of his “experts” kept telling him that the United States gets a lot out of those other countries in the way of intelligence that helps the United States to continue to be a power in the world. An example is Afghanistan:

“Trump was one of the most outspoken foes of the 16-year-old Afghanistan War, now the longest in American history. To the extent Trump had a bedrock principle, it was opposition, even ridicule, of the war. Beginning in 2011, four years before his formal entry into the presidential race, he launched a drumbeat of Twitter attacks. In March 2012, he tweeted, “Afghanistan is a total disaster. We don’t know what we are doing. They are, in addition to everything else, robbing us blind.” In 2013, the tweets picked up. In January, it was, “Let’s get out of Afghanistan. Our troops are being killed by the Afghanis we train and we waste billions there. Nonsense! Rebuild the USA.” In March, “We should leave Afghanistan immediately. No more wasted lives. If we have to go back in, we go in hard & quick. Rebuild the US first.” In April, “Our gov’t is so pathetic that some of the billions being wasted in Afghanistan are ending up with terrorists.” And in November, “Do not allow our very stupid leaders to sign a deal that keeps us in Afghanistan through 2024-with all costs by U.S.A. MAKE AMERICA GREAT!” And in December 2015, Trump tweeted, “A suicide bomber has just killed U.S. troops in Afghanistan. When will our leaders get tough and smart. We are being led to slaughter!”

Later in the book Woodward writes: “The National Security Council gathered in the Situation Room at 10:00 the next morning, July 19, to brief Trump on the Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy. McMaster spent the initial part of the meeting identifying objectives and framing issues for discussion. Trump looked bored and seemed disengaged. After about five minutes, he interrupted. “I’ve been hearing about this nonsense about Afghanistan for 17 years with no success,” he said before McMaster had finished laying out the issues. We’ve got a bunch of inconsistent, short-term strategies. We can’t continue with the same old strategy.”

“I don’t care about you guys,” he told Mattis, Dunford and McMaster. We’re losing big in Afghanistan. It’s a disaster. Our allies aren’t helping. Ghost soldiers—those paid but not serving—are ripping us off. NATO is a disaster and a waste, he said. The soldiers had told him that NATO staff were totally dysfunctional. “Pakistan isn’t helping us. They’re not really a friend,” despite the $1.3 billion a year in aid the U.S. gave them. He said he refused to send any additional aid. The Afghan leaders were corrupt and making money off of the United States, he insisted. The poppy fields, largely in Taliban territory, are out of control. “The soldiers on the ground could run things much better than you,” the president told his generals and advisers. “They could do a much better job. I don’t know what the hell we’re doing.”

“It was a 25-minute dressing-down of the generals and senior officials. “Look, you can’t think of Afghanistan in isolation,” Tillerson said. “You’ve got to think about it in a regional context. We’ve never before taken this sort of multilateral approach to Afghanistan and the region.” “But how many more deaths?” Trump asked. “How many more lost limbs? How much longer are we going to be there?” His antiwar argument, practically ripped from a Bob Dylan song lyric, reflected the desires of his political base whose families were overrepresented in the military forces. “The quickest way out is to lose,” Mattis said. Trump pivoted. Prime Minister Modi of India is a friend of mine, he said. I like him very much. He told me the U.S. has gotten nothing out of Afghanistan. Nothing. Afghanistan has massive mineral wealth. We don’t take it like others—like China. The U.S. needed to get some of Afghanistan’s valuable minerals in exchange for any support. “**I’m not making a deal on anything until we get minerals.**”

**So much for American exceptionalism!!**

Trump was appalled at the level of the U.S. trade deficits. According to Woodward, except for **Peter Navarro**, most main-stream economists differed with Trump’s views on the evil of such deficits: “Nearly all economists disagreed with Trump, but he found an academic economist who hated free trade as much as he did. He brought him to the White House as both director of trade and industrial policy and director of the National Trade Council. Peter Navarro was a 67-year-old Harvard PhD in economics. “This is the president’s vision,” Navarro publicly said. “My function really as an economist is to try to provide the underlying analytics that confirm his intuition. And **his intuition is always right in these matters.**”

Gary Cohn was convinced that **trade deficits were irrelevant** and could be a good thing, allowing Americans to buy cheaper goods. Goods from Mexico, Canada and China were flooding into the United States because they were competitively priced. Americans who spent less money on those imported goods had more money to spend on other products, services and savings. This was the efficiency of global markets. Cohn and Navarro clashed. At one meeting in the Oval Office with Trump and Navarro, Cohn said that 99.9999 percent of the world’s economists agreed with him. It was basically true. Navarro stood virtually alone. Navarro took Cohn on, calling him a Wall Street establishment idiot. The core of Navarro’s argument was that U.S. trade deficits were driven by high tariffs imposed by foreign countries like China, currency manipulation, intellectual property theft, sweatshop labor and lax environmental controls.”

“The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had sucked the manufacturing lifeblood out of the U.S. just as Trump predicted, Navarro said, **turning Mexico into a manufacturing powerhouse, while driving U.S. workers to the poorhouse. U.S. steelworkers were being laid off and steel prices were dropping.** Trump should impose tariffs on imported steel.”

Much of Fear deals with the infighting that occurs among the Trump appointees. Peter Navarro, Steve Bannon, Stephen Miller, and Wilbur Ross were on the nationalist side and Mnuchin, Cohn, Priebus, and Porter were on the “Wall Street Wing.” Trump basically stood with whomever Fox News favored at a given time. Trump’s daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Kushner hated Bannon. ““Kelly, McMaster, Tillerson and Mattis joked darkly that it was inexplicable that the president was voicing more ire at South Korea than our adversaries—China, Russia, Iran, Syria and North Korea. The senior White House staff and national security team were appalled.”

“Reince Priebus, Trump’s first chief of staff, believed the White House was not leading on key issues like health-care and tax reform, and that foreign policy was not coherent and often contradictory. The Trump White House did not have a team of rivals but a team of predators, he concluded. “When you put a snake and a rat and a falcon and a rabbit and a shark and a seal in a zoo without walls, things start getting nasty and bloody. That’s what happens.” In July 2017, Priebus was replaced by Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly.”

“Trump clashed with his national security adviser, H. R. McMaster; his chief of staff, retired General John Kelly; and his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson. In contrast, his vice president, Mike Pence, kept a low profile, avoiding conflict.”

And then there is the addressing of the whole **Mueller investigation** and **Trump’s attack on the main-stream media** (other than his co-conspirator – Fox News). It is interesting to read about Trump’s rage and twitter storms, but it really has little to do with actual policy being implemented.

Woodward spends time on the frustration of long-time Trump lawyer John Dowd. Dowd was a “the seasoned, gray-haired litigator who had represented Trump for decades in divorces and bankruptcies, asked **John Dowd**, 76, one of the most experienced attorneys in white-collar criminal defense.” Dowd agreed to work for only $100,00 a month as a favor to Trump.

“Dowd discussed the known facts with Trump’s legal advisers and reviewed the material for possible vulnerabilities. Based on a preliminary review of the known evidence, he did not see anything to support a charge of collusion with the Russians or obstruction of justice.” Dowd believed that getting information on Hillary Clinton from Russian operatives was not a crime and, in any case, everyone gets dirt on their opponents. Since he thought Trump was innocent, Dowd cooperated with the Mueller investigators by providing them with the information they sought. However, **knowing that Trump was a pathological liar, Dowd opposed Trump testifying. He thought Trump would be guilty of perjury**. During that time, Trump claimed he would be a great witness and was not opposed to testifying. This led Dowd to resign. This part of the book has little to do with national policy.

Finally, Woodward does a good job explaining **why Trump depends on Tweeting:** ““This is my megaphone,” Trump said again. “Let’s not call it Twitter. Let’s call it social media.” Though the White House had Facebook and Instagram accounts, Trump did not use them. He stuck to Twitter. “This is who I am. This is how I communicate. It’s the reason I got elected. It’s the reason that I’m successful.” The tweets were not incidental to his presidency. They were central. He ordered printouts of his recent tweets that had received a high number of likes, 200,000 or more. He studied them to find the common themes in the most successful. He seemed to want to become more strategic, find out whether success was tied to the subject, the language or simply the surprise that the president was weighing in. The most effective tweets were often the most shocking. Later, when Twitter announced the number of permissible characters in a single tweet was being doubled from 140 to 280, Trump told Porter he thought the change made sense on one level. Now he would be able to flesh out his thoughts and add more depth. “It’s a good thing,” Trump said, “but it’s a bit of a shame because **I was the Ernest Hemingway of 140 characters.”**

And Hemingway is turning over in his grave.

# Presidential Lying Is Contagious

**Donald Trump’s chronic dishonesty threatens to infect his entire administration.**

By The Editorial Board New York Times

The editorial board represents the opinions of the board, its editor and the publisher. It is separate from the newsroom and the Op-Ed section.

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Everyone wants to curry favor with the boss. If she golfs, you hit the driving range. If he’s a movie buff, you haunt the multiplex. So when the president of the United States continually makes clear that he is a huge fan of “alternative facts,” what’s an eager-to-please administration official to do?

Take **Brock Long**, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As Hurricane Florence buffeted the Carolinas last weekend, Mr. Long went on the Sunday news shows to discuss the government’s response efforts. But he soon found himself fielding questions about President Trump’s claim that, contrary to Puerto Rico’s official estimate, “3,000 people did not die” as a result of Hurricane Maria, which devastated the island last year. That death toll, according to the president, was manufactured by Democrats desperate to make him “look as bad as possible.”

Mr. Trump’s denial of this mass tragedy prompted dismayed pushback, even among Republican officials. But Mr. Long, like a good soldier, rushed right in to shore up his boss’s wild theory on how the data had been cooked. “You might see more deaths indirectly occur as time goes on because people have heart attacks due to stress, they fall off their house trying to fix their roof, they die in car crashes because they went through an intersection where the stoplights weren’t working,” he told NBC’s “Meet the Press,” adding: “Spousal abuse goes through the roof. You can’t blame spousal abuse, you know, after a disaster on anybody.”

Determining which deaths should be included in the official count (2,975 people) is indeed tricky business, which is why the Puerto Rican government commissioned independent researchers at George Washington University to conduct the analysis on which the death toll was based. Mr. Long was dismissing their methodology in his quest to support Mr. Trump’s tale of political victimhood.

It has been noted that Mr. Long was going through a professional rough patch that might have made him extra keen to stay in the president’s good graces. The FEMA chief has been under investigation by the inspector general at the Department of Homeland Security for possibly misusing government resources, including personnel and vehicles, while commuting between Washington and his home in North Carolina. On Monday, the news broke that the case had been referred to federal prosecutors, even as the House oversight committee announced that it, too, would be looking into the matter. But on Friday night it was announced that Mr. Long could keep his job if he reimbursed the government for use of the vehicles, and that he might not face criminal charges.

However Mr. Long’s ethical troubles factor into the equation, Mr. Trump has made clear that he considers it the duty of all administration officials to peddle his version of reality to protect his interests, be it on matters of policy, politics or the embarrassing Russia investigation. Failure to do so is the quickest path to the presidential doghouse. (Right, Mr. Attorney General?)

Commerce Secretary **Wilbur Ross** has been accused of ethical shiftiness in his past business dealings that would get someone in his position booted from any normal administration, or at least swallowed up in a major scandal. Former associates say he cheated them out of more than $120 million.

So it was no surprise this week when compelling evidence emerged that the secretary may have committed perjury in his zealous pursuit of the president’s agenda. Mr. Ross has been under fire for months for his department’s push to add a question about citizenship status to the census form. Critics see the move as part of the administration’s effort to depress voting among certain demographic groups. The attorney general of New York, Barbara Underwood, has filed suit on behalf of 18 states to block the question.

In March, Mr. Ross testified before Congress that the question had been “initiated” in a request last December from the Department of Justice, as a way to improve enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Various documents have since come to light that appear to contradict his testimony, detailing Mr. Ross’s early enthusiasm for the question. On Monday, Ms. Underwood released an unredacted Commerce Department memo showing that in fact, the Justice Department initially resisted pressure from Mr. Ross’s department to request such a question. On Friday, a federal judge ruled that Mr. Ross can be questioned under oath, and called “the credibility of Secretary Ross squarely at issue.”

Then, of course, there’s **Kirstjen Nielsen**, the secretary of homeland security, who this past spring was reportedly on thin ice with Mr. Trump for her failure to shut down migrant crossings at the border. By early summer, Ms. Nielsen found herself insisting that the administration did not have a policy of splitting apart migrant families even as she was aggressively enforcing and publicly defending that policy.

On other issues, Ms. Nielsen has seemed more conflicted about toeing the president’s line, such as on the question of whether Russia meddled in the 2016 elections specifically with an eye toward helping Mr. Trump win. The federal government’s intelligence community says it did. Mr. Trump says it didn’t. Ms. Nielsen has gone back and forth. In late May, she said she’d seen no reason to believe that Russia had favored Mr. Trump. Hours later, her office walked back those remarks. But come July, Ms. Nielsen restated her original position — after which she and her office promptly issued statements that made her view incomprehensible.

Over at the Interior Department last year, the secretary, **Ryan Zinke**, and top aides, in their crusade to downsize various national monuments, withheld data pointing to the benefits, both economic and archaeological, of keeping protections in place while they played up the benefits of removing the protections. The deception was discovered in July when the department accidentally released a nonredacted version of the study in question — only to quickly recall it and send out the version tailored to make their case.

And let us not forget Mr. Trump’s most committed and creative defender, **Sarah Huckabee Sanders,** the White House press secretary. She is regularly dispatched by her boss to mislead the American people on issues ranging from whether the president paid hush money to Stormy Daniels, the former porn star who claims to have had an affair with Mr. Trump, to whether he dictated a false statement about the Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and the Russians. She has also taken it upon herself to tell whoppers about less salacious matters, including the trend in black unemployment and how diversity visas are issued.

While scandalous, this kind of behavior is also depressingly predictable. When the president repeatedly sends the signal that he regards honesty as a handicap, he can quickly drag the whole executive branch down to his level.

# Trump’s First Two Years

Selected sections (by Martin Hittelman) from *The Trump Administration and International Law*

By Harold Hongju Koh

## Immigration and Refugees

Perhaps the most visible face of the Trump administration’s international policies has been its **harsh stance on immigration**, including three successive **Travel Bans**; an order seeking to strip all federal funding from so-called sanctuary cities; and strict border controls, as illustrated by repeated calls for a Wall (allegedly to be paid for by Mexico, but in fact calling for billions of U.S. taxpayer expenses). The administration ended temporary protected status (TPS) for sixty thousand Hondurans, forty-six thousand Haitians, twenty-five hundred Nicaraguans, and two hundred thousand Salvadorans. Trump’s team declared its hostility toward refugees, the courts, and “chain migration”; announced plans to cut legal immigration in half with “skills-based immigration” that would eliminate the visa lottery; and unveiled an aggressively maximalist penchant for deportation, even of “**Dreamers**.”

At the international level, citing concerns about U.S. sovereignty, the administration ended participation in the **Global Compact on Migration**.

Perhaps its most revealing tactic was its adoption of “shock-and-awe” raids in schools, businesses, and homes, including a strikingly heartless policy (discussed in the Afterword) of separating migrant parents from their children, in an effort to encourage “self-deportation.” Most glaring, in April 2017 and 2018, Trump demonstrated a dissonant willingness to drop bombs out of professed sympathy for the very same Syrian children that his administration has refused to admit into the United States.

On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed his most visible executive order. For ninety days, his Travel Ban 1.0 blocked entry into the United States by citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries (adjusted in March to six and in September to six majority-Muslim countries plus North Korea and Venezuela). The Ban initially barred individuals with valid visas and green cards from those countries from re-entering the United States. For 120 days, the Ban suspended entry of all refugees into the United States, and for an indefinite period of time barred all Syrian refugees.

This Travel Ban amounted to a thinly disguised **Muslim Ban,** not least because on the campaign trail, candidate Trump had repeatedly promised to impose just such a measure.

First, under international law, such a ban facially violates two treaties to which the United States has long been a party: the Refugee Convention, which requires that “[t]he Contracting States shall apply the provisions of this Convention to refugees without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin,” as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that “[a]ll persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.”

Second, these norms have been internalized into the domestic law of the United States, a country founded on religious freedom.

origin.

Third, as a matter of policy, the Ban was both over- and underinclusive. While none of the countries from which people were excluded had ever actually produced a terrorist who had killed anyone on U.S. soil, other countries that had (e.g., Saudi Arabia, from which most of the 9/11 attackers hailed) were not on the list.

Fourth, the president had repeatedly called for “extreme vetting.”

Fifth, the Travel Ban emerged from a grossly defective and arbitrary governmental process. As it was rushed into operation, the executive order was not vetted by knowledgeable governmental lawyers, the incoming secretaries in the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, or most of the key legislators who oversee counterintelligence and homeland security issues.

Sixth, and most glaringly, the sudden, overbroad Travel Ban responded to no new national security threat

Beneath it all, the question lingers: how much does Donald Trump really care about the Muslim Ban? Even if the Court ends up sustaining Travel Ban 3.0, **hasn’t he already spent too much capital on a counterproductive policy that he does not really need, and that has needlessly alienated many who otherwise might have been willing to work with him?**

The Battle of the Ban has cost Trump dearly. It has alienated him from his bureaucracy, stamped his administration as xenophobic, and driven a wedge between his fragile coalition of Trumpites and traditional Republicans. Every piece of capital he has spent on this issue has weakened his hand on other immigration issues, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) reform, and diverted energy from the core agenda that actually interests his coalition: Obamacare repeal (which has repeatedly failed), jobs, regulatory rollback, and infrastructure reform.

The bruising “Battle of the Ban” has only galvanized Trump’s legal opposition and hardened and educated the Resistance. In the process, it has helped to shrink Trump’s coalition to its base, leaving precious little capital to support his core issues.

## Climate Change

Trump’s 2017 announcement of his “intent” for the United States to “withdraw” from the **Paris Agreement** was again driven by a philosophy of “disengage–black hole–hard power.” But his rhetoric launched little meaningful legal action—for the simple reason that his announcement did not legally disengage. **International law makes clear that U.S. presidents cannot simply delete prior signatures from treaties.**

The Paris Agreement recognizes withdrawal only under the terms specified in the Agreement’s text, which plainly declare that a party cannot give notice of withdrawal to the U.N. Secretary General until “three years from the date on which this Agreement has entered into force.” Since the Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016, the earliest date that the United States could even give such legal notice would be November 4, 2019. That notification would then take another full year to take legal effect, meaning that Trump cannot legally withdraw the U.S. from the Agreement until November 4, 2020, the day after the next U.S. presidential election. Until then, Trump’s withdrawal announcement has no more legal meaning than one of his tweets.

While Trump has committed an egregious self-inflicted wound by preemptively announcing his intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, for the next two years, there is little reason to treat his withdrawal announcement as either definitive or final. Since the announcement, the administration has sent confusing messages to U.S. allies as to whether it will actually follow through when the time comes.

When Trump’s EPA proposed relaxing the Obama administration’s fuel economy standards, seventeen states and the District of Columbia quickly sued to block the rollback.15 Regardless of the outcome of this lawsuit, Obama’s standards are locked in until 2021, at which point a new president may be in office.

When Trump’s EPA tried to stay enforcement of the Obama administration’s already-final methane standards for new and modified oil and gas sites, claiming that its decision to do so was immune from judicial review, the court found that action to be “arbitrary and capricious” and an ineffective revocation that exceeded the agency’s authority under the **Clean Air Act**. The court went on to rule that the EPA would have to initiate full rulemaking procedures to stay or undo the regulation and until then was required to enforce the Methane Rule. Litigation also continues in defense of the EPA’s authority to regulate hydrofluorocarbons, with a new agreement to control these compounds recently concluded in Kigali, Rwanda. In short, the domestic internalization of international climate norms remains sticky, and not so easily altered by Trump’s EPA.

The lesson, in short, is that **the Trump administration does not own our climate policy**. We all do. The Paris Agreement was a bold global bet that developed and developing nations would all cooperate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through incentives to develop clean energy. The environmental community and the many transnational actors committed to cleaner energy are far bigger than Donald Trump. His administration remains visibly divided on this issue, and he has personally demonstrated little meaningful commitment or capacity to follow through on any of his public statements.

If the federal government does not live up to its Paris commitments, many other players can and are stepping up to fill the gap. As Trump’s policies and credibility fray on many fronts, his so-called Paris “withdrawal” may be just another one of them. Only time will tell whether, with concerted effort and aggressive innovation—in Humphrey Bogart’s words—“we’ll always have Paris.”

## Trade Diplomacy

A parallel story could be told about President Trump’s calamitous trade diplomacy, which has **disrupted alliances, potentially sparked trade wars, stalled freer trade, and left the United States on the sidelines of major trade liberalization initiatives.**

Upon entering office, Trump acted on that perception to instigate three unilateral moves. First, he announced the United States’ withdrawal from the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** (TPP), a multilateral trade pact with eleven Pacific nations, of which the Obama administration had been a major architect. After Trump’s exit, many assumed that the TPP would collapse without U.S. participation, but the other parties—principally Australia, Canada, Chile, and Japan—continued the partnership anyway.

Trump initially announced that he would withdraw from the **North American Free Trade Agreement** (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico and the Republic of Korea–**U.S. Free Trade Agreement** (KORUS). But after facing intense opposition from his own Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, which feared the impact on their domestic constituencies, Trump shifted to a hasty plan to “renegotiate” the agreements without advance buy-in from the other partners.

With South Korea, Trump’s room to maneuver proved even more limited, because he underestimated the deeply interconnected nature of U.S. trade and national security policy. His need for Pacific allies to help contain North Korean nuclear adventurism forced him to reverse his early courtship of Taiwan and his initial threats to sharply reduce Chinese imports. Flip-flopping on his early condemnation of China as a “currency manipulator,” Trump went to Beijing to give China “great credit” for “being able to take advantage of another country for the benefit of their citizens.” And in early negotiating rounds, the Koreans met Trump’s threats to annul or renegotiate the KORUS by boldly suggesting that if it came to that, South Korea was ready to annul first.

By late March 2018, a bilateral agreement in principle was finally reached after a hasty negotiation that—despite Trump’s rhetoric—**ended up producing only modest changes**. As his third unilateral move after entering office, Trump launched a series of punitive measures against other nations’ purportedly unfair trade practices. He followed by announcing startlingly aggressive tariffs on steel and aluminum imports—supposedly, like the Travel Ban, issued in the name of national security. Blurring the traditionally separate national security and trade policy streams, Trump invoked national security to call for auto tariffs on Mexico, Canada, Japan, and Germany, presumably to gain greater leverage for NAFTA renegotiations. But he undermined his own credibility almost immediately, by granting a series of retreats, exemptions, and short-term waivers (with respect to the metal tariffs) after the various affected trading partners pushed back.

As in other areas, the Trump administration has offered mainly empty threats to resign from, without really leaving, key trade agreements. That tactic has simply created more “lose–lose” situations, stalling preexisting deals and alienating existing trade partners without creating new ones.

In nearly every available venue for trade liberalization, the United States has gone from leader to bystander, losing in the process past allies, future leverage, and immediate benefits from freer trade. **Of the 35 trade pacts currently under consideration worldwide, the United States is a party to just one.**

## The Iran Nuclear Deal

Much the same story could be told about the **Iran Nuclear Deal**, which candidate Trump threatened to “rip up” and President Trump repeatedly called “the worst deal in history.”63 The July 14, 2015 **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action** (JCPOA) envisioned actions by Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the allies known as the P5+1 (the five permanent U.N. members—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia—plus Germany, with a European Union representative speaking for the three European countries). After extended negotiation, Iran agreed to specified limits on its nuclear development program in exchange for the P5+1’s joint relaxation of domestic and international sanctions that had been imposed through the United Nations.

The Iran deal shows that Trump’s strategy of disengage–black hole–hard power leads nowhere. **Trump claims that his withdrawal will take until at least the end of 2018 to fully implement.** Until then, the United States will stay in the Iran Deal and underperform. But as the next chapter shows, Trump has once again underestimated the deep interconnectivity of our global commitments.

By conveying that the United States is leaving the Iran Deal, he has given Iran’s hardliners greater cause to be the first mover in actually breaking the deal. Instead of staying in step with his allies, he has set in motion a process that threatens to make them adversaries. Transnational legal process continues, but his actions have now made the United States, not Iran, the target of that process. Having checked the “resign” box, Trump now seems inclined to claim that he has finally taken strong symbolic action against Iran and turn his real attention elsewhere (while continuing to demonize Iran rhetorically).

# Trump’s Corruption: The Definitive List

The many ways that the president, his family and his aides are lining their own pockets.

By David Leonhardt and Ian Prasad Philbrick

New York Times Opinion

Oct. 28, 2018

President Trump, his family and more than a few of his appointees are using his presidency to enrich themselves. They are spending taxpayer dollars for their own benefit. They are accepting sweetheart deals from foreigners. And they are harnessing the power of the federal government on behalf of their businesses.

There’s a word for this: corruption.

Given how widespread Trumpian corruption has become, we thought it was time to make a list. It’s meant to be a definitive list of self-dealing by the president, his family, his staff or his friends — since he began running for president. To qualify, an incident needs to seem highly credible, even if it remains unresolved, and needs to involve making money.

Compiling the list made us understand why some historians believe Trump’s administration is the most corrupt since at least Warren Harding’s, of 1920s Teapot Dome fame. Trump administration officials and people close to them are brashly using power to amass perks and cash. They are betting that they can get away with it. So far, Congress has let them.

Here’s the list, sorted into thematic categories:

## Trump and Family

Foreigners are paying the Trumps.

A few days after the 2016 election, the government of Kuwait canceled a planned event at the Four Seasons Hotel. It instead held the event — a celebration of Kuwait’s National Day — at the Trump International Hotel in Washington.

That celebration fits a pattern. Officials from foreign governments have realized they can curry favor with Trump by spending money at his properties. The list of governments includes Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bahrain, Azerbaijan, Turkey, China, India, Afghanistan and Qatar. Some may have done so even if he were not the president, but others are well aware of what they are doing.

The Constitution forbids federal officials from accepting gifts, known as emoluments, from foreign powers, unless they have received congressional approval. Congressional Democrats have sued Trump for violating this clause, and the case is now in federal court.

## Americans are paying the Trumps.

American officials and business leaders have also spent money at Trump properties, sometimes in an apparent effort to please the president. Gov. Paul LePage of Maine last year stayed at the Trump International Hotel in Washington. Other Republicans have held campaign fund-raisers and party events at the properties. So have corporate lobbyists.

“National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association Dinner at the Trump Hotel where I am drinking Trump coffee,” Senator Chuck Grassley, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, posted on Instagram last year.

## Trump Inc. is expanding overseas.

During Trump’s presidency, his companies have pushed to expand overseas, with help from foreign governments. One example: In May, an Indonesian real-estate project that involves the Trump Organization reportedly received a $500 million loan from a company owned by the Chinese government. Two days later, Trump tweeted that he was working to lift sanctions on a Chinese telecommunications firm with close ties to the government — over the objections of both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. He ultimately did lift the sanctions.

Trump’s businesses have also moved to expand in India, the Dominican Republic and Indonesia, using deals directly with foreign governments.

## Kushner Inc. is wooing foreign investment.

Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law and a top aide, has also reportedly been using his position to help his family business — Kushner Companies, also a real-estate company. Kushner’s sister, Nicole Meyer, has bragged about the company’s high-level ties when trying to attract Chinese investment in a New Jersey apartment complex. The Kushners have wooed Chinese investors despite warnings from American counterintelligence officials that China is using the investments to sway Trump administration policy.

The Kushner company also successfully lobbied the Qatari government to invest in 666 Fifth Avenue, a financially troubled luxury building. The company’s dealings with Middle Eastern countries are especially problematic because Jared Kushner is one of the administration’s top policymakers for the region and has played a central role in policy toward Qatar.

## The presidency has become a branding opportunity.

The president has played golf at his properties dozens of times since taking office. He refers to his Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago, as the winter White House. Shortly after his election, he celebrated New Year’s along with 800 guests there, with tickets costing more than $500. And Kellyanne Conway, a top Trump adviser, once encouraged people to buy clothes from Ivanka Trump’s line — while Conway was giving a television interview from the White House.

These moves are intended, at least partly, to bring attention and ultimately customers to Trump’s businesses. Of course, some of Trump’s critics have responded in kind, refusing to stay at or live in a Trump-branded property since he won the election. But in other ways, the presidency has clearly helped his bottom line. One example: The Mar-a-Lago club has doubled its membership rates.

## Taxpayers are subsidizing the Trumps.

Trump has visited or stayed at one of his properties almost one out of every three days that he has been president, according to both The Wall Street Journal and NBC News. Like previous presidents, Trump travels with a large group of staff and security personnel, and American taxpayers typically foot at least part of the bill for the trips. Unlike previous presidents, Trump is directing money to his own business on his trips.

In one three-month period last year, the Secret Service spent about $63,000 at Mar-a-Lago and more than $137,000 on golf carts at Trump’s Florida and New Jersey clubs.

## Trump Inc. gets special protection.

The president personally intervened in a plan to relocate the F.B.I.’s Washington headquarters, apparently to protect Trump International Hotel, which is about a block away. If the F.B.I. had moved, its current site would most likely have been turned into a commercial development, and the long construction process — as well as potential for a new hotel on the site — could have hurt the Trump hotel.

Trump stopped this plan, and the White House has instead decided to build a new F.B.I. headquarters on the current site. A report by the inspector general found that officials gave misleading answers to Congress about Trump’s role and the project’s cost.

## Friendly businesses also get special treatment.

The Education Department during the Obama administration aggressively regulated for-profit colleges — many of which have miserable records, often taking money from students without providing a useful education. Trump chose Betsy DeVos, a longtime advocate of these colleges and an investor in them, as his education secretary. She, not surprisingly, has gone easy on for-profit colleges. Among other moves, she has reassigned the members of an department team investigating potentially fraudulent activities at for-profit colleges.

DeVos is the most blatant example of administration officials protecting companies where they once worked, but there are many others. More than 164 former lobbyists work in the administration, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, including several who regulate the industries that once paid their salaries. Geoff Burr, who pushed for more lax workplace safety laws when he was the chief lobbyist for a construction group, now works at the Department of Labor. Andrew Wheeler, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, was previously a lobbyist whose firm was paid millions of dollars by companies whose industries he now regulates.

## Family, friends and donors get perks.

The president and his aides have repeatedly shown they are willing to use the government’s prestige and power to help their friends and relatives make money.

Among the examples:

Trump suggested to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan during a meeting at Mar-a-Lago in February 2017 that Abe grant a coveted operating license to a casino company owned by Sheldon Adelson, who donated at least $20 million to Trump’s presidential campaign.

Ben Carson, the housing and urban development secretary, let his son help organize an official department event and invite people with whom the son had potential business dealings.

Scott Pruitt, the former E.P.A. head, asked his staff members to contact Republicans donors with the goal of helping his wife find a job. Pruitt also rented a condo on Capitol Hill for $50 a night, well below market value, from the wife of an energy lobbyist whose project the E.P.A. approved last March. Pruitt’s many scandals led to his resignation in July.

Elaine Chao, the transportation secretary, used interviews with Chinese and Chinese-American media to raise her father’s profile. He is a shipping magnate whose business transports goods between the United States and Asia, and he sat next to her during the interviews.

And although it doesn’t quite rise to the same level of the other examples here: White House staffers receive a discount of up to 70 percent on Trump-branded merchandise at the president’s Bedminster, N.J., golf club, reportedly at the president’s recommendation.

## Cabinet officials make unethical stock trades.

Several Trump officials — current and former — have traded stocks while serving in top government positions. In some cases, they appear to have made policy decisions benefiting the companies in which they owned a stake.

Tom Price, Trump’s first secretary of health and human services, epitomized this form of corruption. Trump chose him despite his history of using his seat in Congress to make money. Price had a long record of putting the interests of drug companies above those of taxpayers and patients — and then investing in those drug companies on the side.

Brenda Fitzgerald, the former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, committed a more mild version of this sin. She purchased shares in food, drug and tobacco companies after taking charge of an agency that regulates them — and that aims to reduce smoking. After her purchases became public, she resigned.

Finally, Wilbur Ross, Trump’s commerce secretary, has mixed government business and his own business in multiple ways. He held on to investments — and then appears to have lied to government ethics officials about those investments. He shorted the stock of a company about which he appeared to have advance notice of bad news. He also met with the chief executive of Chevron, even though his wife owned a substantial investment — which, according to Forbes, “put himself at risk of violating a criminal conflict-of-interest law.”

## Trump’s orbit receives cash.

Michael Cohen — Trump’s former lawyer and fixer, who has since turned on him — received at least $1 million from AT&T, Novartis and Korea Aerospace Industries shortly after the 2016 election. They were supposedly paying for his insight into the Trump administration.

Corey Lewandowski, the former manager of Trump’s campaign, is paid for work that looks very much like lobbying — such as participating in a lobbying firm’s phone calls with clients and doing work on behalf of T-Mobile, the telecommunications company firm. But Lewandowski has not registered as a lobbyist and says he does not need to do so.

Paul Manafort, Trump’s former campaign chairman, reportedly used his position to offer private briefings to a Russian oligarch to whom he owed millions of dollars. Manafort saw the briefings as a way to “get whole.”

## Cabinet officials take junkets.

Trump officials have made a habit of billing American taxpayers for their personal travel. Ryan Zinke, Trump’s secretary of the interior, chartered a $12,000 flight to fly out of Las Vegas, where he had given a 12-minute speech to a hockey team owned by a businessman who donated to his congressional campaign.

David Shulkin, the secretary of veterans affairs, charged taxpayers for a trip to Europe that included stopovers at Wimbledon and Westminster Abbey, plus a river cruise for him and his wife. The resulting outcry appears to have played a role in his departure.

Pruitt, the former head of the E.P.A., chartered flights for questionable travel, among many other things. He also pushed to fly Delta rather than the government’s contract carrier, to accrue frequent flier miles. He flew first class and stayed in hotels that were more expensive than those allowed by government standards. And he let lobbyists help arrange foreign trips for him.

Brock Long, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, spent $151,000 on government vehicles without authorization, including to travel to his North Carolina home. He was ordered to repay the government.

Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, looked into whether he could use a military plane to fly him to Europe for his honeymoon. Later, he used military planes for several trips. The Treasury Department’s inspector general concluded that Mnuchin broke no laws by doing so, but criticized Mnuchin’s insufficient explanation for why he needed to spend $800,000 on the trips.

And Price, the former health secretary, spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on private planes. His history of unethical stock trading didn’t keep Trump from naming Price to the cabinet. But the private-plane scandal received enough attention that the White House eventually forced Price to resign.

## Trump’s team enjoys interior decorating.

The pettiest kind of Trumpian corruption takes the form of interior decorating.

Zinke, the interior secretary, spent $139,000 in taxpayer money on new doors for his office. Carson, the secretary of health and human services, picked out a dining set for his office that cost $31,000 — and then gave Congress contradictory explanations for the purchase and blamed it on his wife. Pruitt ordered a $43,000 soundproof phone booth installed in his office and appears to have violated federal law by failing to inform Congress about it.

## Inaction of Congress

The biggest scandal of all, however, is not even the corruption of the Trump administration. It’s the inaction of Congress.

The founders were well aware that the government they were creating could end up with corrupt or unethical leaders, all the way up to the president. That’s why the Constitution gives Congress tremendous power to investigate and even remove officials in the executive branch.

Yet the current congressional leaders — the Republican leaders — have refused to do so. They have shirked their duty to act as a check on the president and his appointees. They have instead defended Trump and made excuses on his behalf. They have enabled the most corrupt administration of our lifetimes.

David Leonhardt is a former Washington bureau chief for the Times, and was the founding editor of The Upshot and head of The 2020 Project, on the future of the Times newsroom. He won the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, for columns on the financial crisis.

# Trump Closes Out a Campaign Built on Fear, Anger and Division

By Peter Baker, Michael D. Shear and Katie Rogers

Nov. 5, 2018

New York Times

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. — President Trump on Monday closed out an us-against-them midterm election campaign that was **built on dark themes of fear, nationalism and racial animosity** in an effort to salvage Republican control of Congress for the remaining two years of his term.

Mr. Trump’s fiery, invective-filled campaigning produced what may be the most polarized midterm contest in modern times as **he played to tribal rifts in American society in a way that no president has done since before the civil rights era**. The divisions exposed and expanded over the past few weeks seem certain to last well beyond Election Day.

On Tuesday, **voters will choose a new House, decide one-third of the seats in the Senate and select new governors for battleground states** that will be critical to the 2020 presidential campaign. On the line for the president will be his ability to legislate, build his promised border wall, appoint new judges and ultimately set the stage to run for a second term.

More than most midterms, this election became a referendum on Mr. Trump, as he himself has told his audiences it would be. The president’s energetic rallies appear to have bolstered Republicans who were trying to match Democratic fervor, rooted in antipathy for Mr. Trump. Even before Election Day, 36 million ballots were cast, with early voting higher than four years ago in 25 states and the District of Columbia.

Democrats appeared poised to recapture control of the House and governors’ mansions in key Midwestern states, but Republicans were confident they would hold onto their razor-thin 51-to-49 majority in the Senate and possibly even build on it. A split decision could set the stage for two years of partisan warfare led by subpoena-powered Democratic committee leaders intent on investigating everything from the president’s taxes to Russia’s involvement in the 2016 election.

Mr. Trump spent Monday barnstorming the Midwest on behalf of allies in close races, drawing loud and enthusiastic crowds of thousands. At rallies in Cleveland; Fort Wayne, Ind.; and finally here in Cape Girardeau, his remarks were laced with his usual acerbic attacks on his adversaries — “radical,” “left-wing socialists,” “corrupt,” “the Democrat mob” — and accusations that Democrats would raise taxes, destroy Medicare and take over the American health care system.

“The Democrat agenda will deliver a socialist nightmare,” Mr. Trump said in Fort Wayne.

But he again reserved his most vitriolic language for immigration, repeatedly prompting loud boos as he warned that if Democrats win, they would invite murderers to come into the United States to kill men, women and children.

“Democrats are inviting caravan after caravan, illegal immigrants to flood into our country,” Mr. Trump boomed in Cleveland. He falsely said that Democrats want to give health care benefits to undocumented immigrants and are openly encouraging undocumented immigrants to vote.

Led by President Barack Obama, who has attacked his successor in a sharper, more sustained way than any former president in decades, Democrats sought to make the vote not just a decision on immigration, health care and other issues, but a test of the nation’s values.

“The character of this country is on the ballot,” Mr. Obama, his voice hoarse from days of campaigning, said during an appearance on Monday in Virginia on behalf of Senator Tim Kaine and Jennifer Wexton, a top House prospect.

“Who we are is on the ballot,” Mr. Obama said. “What kind of politics we expect is on the ballot. How we conduct ourselves in public life is on the ballot. How we treat other people is on the ballot.”

Long before Mr. Trump, presidents have waged fierce campaigns during midterm elections, often demonizing the other side. When he was in office, Mr. Obama painted Republicans as zealots ready to sacrifice Medicare, education and other priorities on the altar of tax cuts for the rich. President George W. Bush accused Democrats of being willing to wave the white flag of surrender to terrorists.

But Mr. Trump has gone even further, not only taking on individual Democratic officeholders by name, which most presidents avoid, but also ridiculing them and insulting them with playground-style taunts. Describing himself as a “nationalist,” Mr. Trump has vilified immigrants, both legal and illegal, in racially charged language that was once considered unacceptable in national politics.

“What you didn’t have” in past midterms “was a systematic and very personally addressed series of attacks and very inflammatory and frankly untrue images and arguments being used,” said Anita Dunn, a Democratic consultant working on races in Ohio and elsewhere. “What’s most interesting about it of course is it is in many ways a strategy that is designed to exacerbate his biggest negatives.”

Democratic strategists predicted that it would backfire. “The president’s campaign efforts over the last two weeks should be counted as an in-kind contribution to the Democratic Party,” said Guy Cecil, the chairman of Priorities USA, a Democratic “super PAC.” “Instead of allaying the fears of many suburban and exurban voters, he confirmed everything that Democrats have been saying about him for two years at the same time he was motivating our base.”

But Mr. Trump’s supporters cheered him on, embracing a leader they said was finally taking on the cosseted elites and guarding the country against outsiders. Advisers to the president said his foes take his campaign rally language too literally; as outrageous as it might seem, it is more entertainment, intended to generate a crowd reaction.

“The challenge for Republicans in a midterm election when you control everything is a lot of your voters are complacent,” said Marc Short, a former White House legislative director under Mr. Trump. “Trump has the challenge of how do I get my people who maybe don’t love Republicans in Congress to turn out. There’s evidence to show that he’s making progress in that.”

Asked by reporters on Monday if the elections were turning as much on his style of leadership as anything else, the president said, “I don’t think so, but, I mean, I’m willing to accept that.”

He made no effort to distance himself from the harshness of his campaign, including an advertisement it produced that was deemed racist and was ultimately rejected by several networks, including his favorite, Fox News, as too offensive to air. “A lot of things are offensive,” Mr. Trump said. “Your questions are offensive a lot of times.”

In an interview released later in the day, however, Mr. Trump expressed some regret for the tenor of his two years in office. “I would like to have a much softer tone,” he told Sinclair Broadcasting, attributing his no-holds-barred style to a desire to get things done.

He suggested he could change after the midterm. “I would love to get along, and I think after the election, a lot of things can happen,” he said. “But right now they are in their mode and we are in our mode. And you know, if you’re criticized, you have to hit back, or you should.”

Mr. Trump used the final day of the campaign to raise the possibility of voter fraud. “Law Enforcement has been strongly notified to watch closely for any ILLEGAL VOTING which may take place in Tuesday’s Election (or Early Voting),” he wrote on Twitter. “Anyone caught will be subject to the Maximum Criminal Penalties allowed by law.”

The president offered no basis for suggesting large-scale fraud was likely. “There are a lot of people, a lot of people, in my opinion and based on proof, that try and get in illegally and actually vote illegally,” he said.

But the invocation of voter fraud could foreshadow Mr. Trump’s reaction if Democrats win the House. After he lost the popular vote in 2016, he explained it away by asserting, without any foundation, that three million illegal immigrants voted.

# Marijuana legalization, daylight savings and other notable measures passed in the midterm elections

By Khorri Atkinson

Axios

November 10, 2018

Voters across the country weighed in on hundreds of ballot initiatives in this year’s midterm cycle on politically-charged issues such as abortion, marijuana legalization and criminal justice reform.

The big picture: The 2018 midterm elections produced a divided Congress that's emblematic of a split America. Amid partisan deadlock in Washington, states have largely become battlegrounds on such controversial issues.

Some notable measures:

## Marijuana legalization: Michigan became the 10th state to legalize marijuana — including the District of Columbia — and first midwestern state to do so for recreational use. North Dakota rejected a similar measure, but voters in Missouri approved the legalization of medical marijuana.

## Abortion: The matter was on the ballot in three states. In Oregon, voters defeated a measure that would have banned the use of public funds to pay for abortion coverage. Alabama and West Virginia approved sweeping anti-abortion language to the states’ constitution, proclaiming that women have no right to perform the procedure.

However, the measures in both states will not affect abortion access unless the Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade.

Transgender rights: Massachusetts upheld a 2016 law that protects transgender people from discrimination in public places, including restaurants, hotels, hospitals, and stores.

## Minimum wage: Arkansas will now raise the wage from $8.50 an hour to $11 by 2021. Missouri's hourly minimum will gradually rise from $7.85 to $12 hour by 2023.

## Criminal justice reform: Louisiana approved a measure to require a unanimous jury for convictions, overturning a Jim Crow-era law that allowed for split juries.

## Medicaid expansion: Three red states — Idaho, Nebraska, and Utah — approved initiatives to adopt the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid.

## Daylight saving: Californians decided they no longer want to reset clocks twice a year. A measure they approved would implement a permanent year-round daylight saving time. But, it requires a two-thirds vote from the state legislature and a change in federal law to go into effect.

## Homelessness: San Francisco will impose tax on big businesses to pay for new services to help curb the city's increasing homelessness crisis. The measure's approval is a major defeat for techies like Twitter and Square CEO Jack Dorsey, Zynga co-founder Mark Pincus, and Stripe CEO Patrick Collision who were against the measure.

## Expand Access to Voting

Voters in some key states across the U.S. overwhelmingly approved a slew of ballot initiatives during the midterm elections that will expand access to voting and curtail excessive partisan gerrymandering.

Why it matters: The measures will make elections more accessible and competitive, and they have the potential to shift the states’ electorates, which will greatly impact the outcome of local and federal elections — including the presidency. Meanwhile, the success of these initiatives could give grassroots organizations a blueprint on how to circumvent GOP-controlled legislatures that have largely opposed attempts to end gerrymandering and expand voting rights.

The state of play:

Last night, **Florida** voters passed a constitutional amendment that automatically re-enfranchised 1.5 million ex-felons. The move is one of the most significant expansions of voting rights in decades, and it will shift the makeup of the country’s largest battleground state, which plays a deciding role in presidential elections.

**Maryland** will allow eligible residents to register to vote as late as Election Day.

Nevada enacted automatic voter registration when drivers contact the Department of Motor Vehicles.

**Michigan** voters approved sweeping election law changes that will be enshrined into the state’s constitution, including same-day voter registration, no-reason absentee ballots and straight-party voting.

Anti-gerrymandering initiatives in **Colorado and Michigan** have now shifted the duty of drawing state legislative and congressional districts into the hands of independent redistricting commissions rather than lawmakers. The fate of a similar measure in **Utah** remained too close to call by early Wednesday. The goal is to make election maps more fair and competitive, and this comes ahead of the next reapportionment process that begins after the 2020 Census count.

Yes, but: Voting rights advocates received brutal blows in **Arkansas and North Carolina,** where Republican-sponsored constitutional amendments requiring voters to present a photo ID at the polls were approved.

**North Carolina** Republicans, who lost their supermajority in the state legislature, will now decide what forms of ID will be accepted.

Reality check: With Republicans successfully securing control of the Senate, President Trump, with the aide of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), will continue to rapidly transform the federal bench with conservative judges who are more likely to uphold restrictive voting laws challenged by advocacy groups.

# Five days of fury: Inside Trump’s Paris temper, election woes and staff upheaval

By Josh Dawsey and Philip Rucker

November 13, 2018

The Washington Post

As he jetted to Paris last Friday, President Trump received a congratulatory phone call aboard Air Force One. British Prime Minister Theresa May was calling to celebrate the Republican Party’s wins in the midterm elections — never mind that Democrats seized control of the House — but her appeal to the American president’s vanity was met with an ornery outburst.

Trump berated May for Britain not doing enough, in his assessment, to contain Iran. He questioned her over Brexit and complained about the trade deals he sees as unfair with European countries. May has endured Trump’s churlish temper before, but still her aides were shaken by his especially foul mood, according to U.S. and European officials briefed on the conversation.

For Trump, that testy call set the tone for five days of fury — evident in Trump’s splenetic tweets and described in interviews with 14 senior administration officials, outside Trump confidants and foreign diplomats, many of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

“He was frustrated with the trip. And he’s itching to make some changes,” said one senior White House official. “This is a week where things could get really dicey.”

During his 43-hour stay in Paris, Trump brooded over the Florida recounts and sulked over key races being called for Democrats in the midterm elections that he had claimed as a “big victory.” He erupted at his staff over media coverage of his decision to skip a ceremony honoring the military sacrifice of World War I.

The president also was angry and resentful over French President Emmanuel Macron’s public rebuke of rising nationalism, which Trump considered a personal attack. And that was after his difficult meeting with Macron, where officials said little progress was made as Trump again brought up his frustrations over trade and Iran.

“He’s just a bull carrying his own china shop with him when­ever he travels the world,” presidential historian Douglas Brinkley said.

Meanwhile, Trump was plotting a shake-up in his administration. He told advisers over the weekend that he had decided to remove Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and that he also was seriously considering replacing White House chief of staff John F. Kelly, who scrambled early this week to try to save Nielsen’s job.

The senior White House official, who speaks to the president regularly, said Trump has been grousing lately about getting rid of Kelly. “But he’s done this three or four times before,” this person said. “Nothing is ever real until he sends the tweet.”

During Sunday’s flight to Washington from Paris, aides filed into the president’s private cabin to lobby against the leading contender to replace Kelly, Nick Ayers, who is Vice President Pence’s chief of staff. These aides told Trump that appointing Ayers would lower staff morale and perhaps trigger an exodus. But the president has continued to praise Ayers, who also enjoys the support of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, according to multiple White House officials.

First lady Melania Trump shared her husband’s irritation and impatience with some of the staff. On Tuesday, amid reports that the president had decided to oust deputy national security adviser Mira R. Ricardel over tensions between her and other administration officials, the first lady’s office issued an extraordinary statement to reporters calling for her firing.

“It is the position of the Office of the First Lady that she no longer deserves the honor of serving in this White House,” said Stephanie Grisham, the first lady’s spokeswoman.

Melania Trump said in an October interview with ABC News that the president had people working for him whom she did not trust and that she has let her husband know. “Some people, they don’t work there anymore,” the first lady said.

In her role as No. 2 to national security adviser John Bolton, Ricardel berated colleagues in meetings, yelled at military aides and White House professional staff, argued with Melania Trump regarding her recent trip to Africa and spread rumors about Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, according to three current and two former White House officials.

Kelly has sought for months to oust Ricardel, calling her a problematic hire in the West Wing, and Mattis has told advisers that he wants her out as well, the officials said.

A National Security Council spokesman did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

Grisham’s statement was remarkable because it is so unusual for a first lady or her East Wing staff to weigh in on personnel matters elsewhere in the White House, particularly in the realm of national security.

Last week, the tumult began even before Trump took off for Paris. After directing Attorney General Jeff Sessions to resign, controversy swirled around acting attorney general Matthew G. Whitaker’s qualifications for the job, business entanglements and previous public opposition to the Russia investigation.

As Trump walked out of the White House residence to board the Marine One helicopter on Friday morning, he paused to answer questions from the press corps and snapped when CNN correspondent Abby Phillip asked whether he wanted Whitaker to rein in special counsel Robert S. Mueller III. “What a stupid question that is,” Trump said. “What a stupid question. But I watch you a lot. You ask a lot of stupid questions.”

Later, aboard Air Force One, Trump again lost his cool, this time during his phone call with May. He berated the British prime minister on Iran, trade and Brexit, among other topics. The White House did not announce that the call took place nor did it provide an official readout, but U.S. and European officials said in interviews that Trump’s mood was sour and his conversation with May was acrimonious.

On his flight there and throughout the weekend, Trump was preoccupied by political developments back in the United States. He watched TV with rapt attention as late-counting votes resulted in the Senate race in Arizona and a number of House contests to slip out of Republican hands, and as recounts got underway in Florida’s Senate and gubernatorial races. He also complained about the lack of congressional funding for his promised wall at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Trump sent political aides in Washington scrambling to prepare detailed briefings for him on the still-to-be-called races. He aired baseless allegations of voter irregularities on Twitter — writing from the plane that elections attorney Marc Elias was the Democrats’ “best Election stealing lawyer” but that he would send “much better lawyers to expose the FRAUD!”

Still, the president told aides he felt disconnected from the action in his suite at the U.S. ambassador’s residence in Paris — even as he consumed countless hours of television news on the trip.

“Trump needs adulation, so heading into the midterms, holding these rallies, he was cheered and it became narcissistic fuel to his engine,” Brinkley said. “After the midterm, it’s the sober dawn of the morning.”

Trump was awake Saturday well before dawn, if he got much sleep at all, tweeting at 4:52 a.m. Paris time a two-part defense of Whitaker as “highly thought of” and “outstanding.” Later in the day, he scuttled plans to attend a ceremony honoring the military sacrifice of World War I at an American cemetery outside the French capital, citing bad weather.

Trump was told that morning by Deputy White House Chief of Staff Zachary D. Fuentes that the Secret Service had concerns about flying Marine One through the rain and fog from Paris to the cemetery 50 miles away, and that a motorcade could be lengthy and snarl traffic in the area, according to one senior White House official.

Trump chose not to make the trip, and Kelly, a retired Marine Corps general, and Marine Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, attended in his stead. But Trump quickly grew infuriated by a torrent of tweets and media coverage suggesting that the president was afraid of the rain and did not respect veterans.

Former secretary of state John F. Kerry, a decorated Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, tweeted: “President @realDonaldTrump a no-show because of raindrops? Those veterans the president didn’t bother to honor fought in the rain, in the mud, in the snow — & many died in trenches for the cause of freedom. Rain didn’t stop them & it shouldn’t have stopped an American president.”

Trump told aides he thought he looked “terrible” and blamed his chief of staff’s office, and Fuentes in particular, for not counseling him that skipping the cemetery visit would be a public-relations nightmare. Trump was still litigating the episode on Tuesday, when he tweeted from the White House that he suggested driving to the cemetery and “Secret Service said NO, too far from airport & big Paris shutdown.”

On Sunday, he got angry at Macron for his remarks at a ceremony honoring the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. The French president denounced rising nationalism around the world and called it a “betrayal of patriotism,” with two of the world’s leading nationalists — Trump and Russian President Vladi­mir Putin — in attendance.

Trump told advisers he considered Macron’s comment a personal insult, and it came on the heels of a disagreement between the two leaders over Macron’s call for a “true European army.” At their bilateral meeting on Saturday, Trump appeared subdued and almost sullen.

Once he was back home in Washington, Trump unloaded on his French counterpart, likening Macron’s call for a European army to Germany’s military expansion in World War I and World War II. Trump tweeted Tuesday morning, “How did that work out for France? They were starting to learn German in Paris before the U.S. came along. Pay for NATO or not!”

Trump also lashed out over trade agreements — “Not fair, must change!” he tweeted — that he argued make it easy for the United States to sell French wines but difficult for France to sell American wines.

And then he attacked Macron for his unpopularity in France — while providing a bit of sloganeering advice. “The problem is that Emmanuel suffers from a very low Approval Rating in France, 26%, and an unemployment rate of almost 10%,” Trump wrote on Twitter. “He was just trying to get onto another subject. By the way, there is no country more Nationalist than France, very proud people-and rightfully so!.. MAKE FRANCE GREAT AGAIN!”

Jacqueline Alemany and Felicia Sonmez contributed to this report.

# Trump-loving Sinclair is forcing local news stations to broadcast this bigoted segment defending the border tear-gas attack against children

"And Trump thinks we need another news network devoted to pushing his propaganda?"

By Julia Conley / Common Dreams

November 28, 2018

Though President Donald Trump this week expressed an interest in establishing a state-run TV news network due to his dissatisfaction with the media's coverage of his historically unpopular presidency, the Sinclair Broadcast Group on Tuesday appeared to fulfill that role with another of its "must-run" pro-Trump segments, this time defending the use of tear gas on migrant children at the southern U.S. border.

In a segment all 173 Sinclair stations were ordered to air, former Trump adviser Boris Epshteyn rejected criticism of the tear gassing and said the actions taken by U.S. border patrol agents on Sunday were necessary for the nation's security.

As Tim Karr of the media advocacy group Free Press wrote on Twitter, the network is already effectively serving as the state TV station the president has alluded to.

TimKarr @TimKarr  *And Trump thinks we need another news network devoted to pushing his propaganda? https://www.mediaite.com/tv/sinclair-makes-200-local-news-stations-run-segment-supporting-use-of-tear-gas-on-migrants/ …*

Sinclair Makes 200 Local News Stations Run Segment Supporting Use of Tear Gas on Migrants

“Dozens of migrants attacked U.S. border enforcement."

"The fact of the matter is that this is an attempted invasion of our country. Period," Epshteyn said of the asylum-seekers who have spent the past several weeks traveling from Central America through Mexico to the border. "Our border must remain intact and secure."

Pam Vogel @pamela\_vogel NEW: *Sinclair stations are now airing a Boris Epshteyn "must-run" segment defending tear-gassing children at the border. https://www.mediamatters.org/blog/2018/11/27/sinclair-s-latest-must-run-defends-tear-gassing-migrant-children-warns-attempted-invasion/222163 …*

The so-called "caravan" played a central role in Trump's campaign speeches ahead of the midterm elections, with the president and other Republicans claiming that the relatively small group, which includes many parents and children, consisted of violent criminals.

While medical professionals warned of the long-term health effects **tear gas** could have on children and Mexico's Human Rights Commission condemned the use of the chemical, Epshteyn kept up Trump's narrative in his segment. He referred to the group fleeing violence and unrest in their home countries as a "migrant crisis" and defended the use of tear gas to stop the "attack" on border patrol agents—despite the fact that the migrants were not armed.

Sinclair has ordered its stations across the country to air several "must-run" segments defending the Trump administration's policies. Earlier this year Epshteyn was featured in a segment about the president's family separation policy, which led to the forcible separation of about 2,000 children from their parents, slamming Trump's critics for acting as though "those who are tough on immigration are somehow monsters."

Other "must-run" segments have included an attack on "one-sided stories" in the news media and a defense of Trump's comments about the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 in which an attendee drove a car into a crowd of people, killing one counter-protester.

# What we now know about Trump-Russia

Axios by Mike Allen

December 9, 2018

Even before Robert Mueller reports his findings in the Russia probe, what we already now know is highly damning and highly detailed.

We now know several Russian officials reached out to a half dozen Republicans very close to Trump and his campaign, including his eldest son, his closest adviser, his lawyer, and his campaign manager. We now know they took the meetings, often enthusiastically, during and after the campaign.

We now know Russia offered in those chats campaign assistance — “synergy,” they called it. We know now of no one around Trump who alerted the FBI of this effort to subvert our elections.

We now know that 12 Russian intelligence officers were indicted for hacking the DNC and systematically releasing material for the purpose of hurting the Clinton campaign via WikiLeaks.

We know that Trump associates Roger Stone and Jerome Corsi attempted — successfully, in some instances — to get in touch with WikiLeaks and that they are under investigation for whether they had advance knowledge about the email dumps.

We now know Donald Trump, Jr and others took a meeting with Russians promising dirt on Hillary Clinton. We now know Don, Jr., when approached with the promise of dirt, wrote: “If it’s what you say I love it especially later in the summer.”

We now know Trump was negotiating a Trump property in Moscow during the presidential campaign — and hid this from the public and lied about it. We now know Mueller believes, based on his court filing, the “Moscow Project was a lucrative business opportunity that sought, and likely required, the assistance of the Russian government.”

We now know every arm of the US intelligence community concluded Russia sought to systematically influence the election outcome. We now know this was an unanimous conclusion, save one dissent: Trump.

We now know Trump officials continued talking with the Russians during the post-election transition. We now know Jared Kushner and Jeff Sessions failed to initially disclose any contacts with Russians on their government forms.

We now know Jared Kushner suggested a secret backchannel with the Russians, which had it happened, would have been free of US eavesdropping.

We now know Trump soured on FBI director James Comey, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and White House counsel Don McGahn in part over their handling of the probe.

We now know Paul Manafort, who ran the Trump campaign in the summer of 2016, lied about his Russia contacts, was indicted, and is going to jail.

We now know Flynn lied about his Russian contacts, was fired and indicted, and then flipped to become a key witness in the investigation.

We now know Cohen lied about his Russian contacts, was indicted, and then flipped to become a key witness against Trump.

Be smart: The scary thing for Trump — Mueller knows a helluva lot more than we now know.

# Mounting legal threats surround Trump as nearly every organization he has led is under investigation

By David A. Fahrenthold , Matt Zapotosky and Seung Min Kim

December 15, 2018

Two years after Donald Trump won the presidency, nearly every organization he has led in the past decade is under investigation. Trump’s private company is contending with civil suits digging into its business with foreign governments and with looming state inquiries into its tax practices. Trump’s 2016 campaign is under scrutiny by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, whose investigation into Russian interference has already led to guilty pleas by his campaign chairman and four advisers.

Trump’s inaugural committee has been probed by Mueller for illegal foreign donations, a topic that the incoming House Intelligence Committee chairman plans to further investigate next year. Trump’s charity is locked in an ongoing suit with New York state, which has accused the foundation of “persistently illegal conduct.”

The mounting inquiries are building into a cascade of legal challenges that threaten to dominate Trump’s third year in the White House. In a few weeks, Democrats will take over in the House and pursue their own investigations into all of the above — and more.

The ultimate consequences for Trump are still unclear. Past Justice Department opinions have held that a sitting president may not be charged with a federal crime.

House Democrats may eventually seek to impeach Trump. But, for now, removing him from office appears unlikely: It would require the support of two-thirds of the Senate, which is controlled by Republicans. However, there has been one immediate impact on a president accustomed to dictating the country’s news cycles but who now struggles to keep up with them: Trump has been forced to spend his political capital — and that of his party — on his defense.

On Capitol Hill this week, weary Senate Republicans scrambled away from reporters to avoid questions about Trump and his longtime fixer Michael Cohen — and Cohen’s courtroom assertion that he had been covering up Trump’s “dirty deeds” when he paid off two women who claimed they had affairs with the president before he was elected. “I don’t do any interviews on anything to do with Trump and that sort of thing, okay?” said Sen. James E. Risch (R-Idaho).

“There’s no question that it’s a distraction from the things that obviously we would like to see him spending his time on, and things we’d like to be spending our time on,” said Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.). “So that’s why I’m hoping that some of this stuff will wrap up soon and we’ll get answers, and we can draw conclusions, and we can move on from there.”

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), summed it up another way: “It’s been a bad week for Individual Number One,” referring to the legal code name prosecutors in Manhattan used in court filings to refer to the president.

Trump attorney Rudolph Giuliani did not respond to a request for comment. Neither did White House or Trump Organization officials.

As the bad news has rolled in, the president has cut back his public schedule. He spent more time than usual in his official residence this week, with more than two dozen hours of unstructured “executive time,” said a person familiar with his schedule. In several tweets on Thursday, Trump sought to cast doubt on two former advisers who have cooperated with investigators. Cohen, Trump said, just wanted a reduced prison sentence. Former national security adviser Michael Flynn, he said, was the victim of scare tactics by the FBI.

Then — after wordy explanations of how both men had gone wrong — Trump tried to sum up his increasingly complex problems with a simple explanation. “WITCH HUNT!” he wrote.

“He’s just never been targeted by an investigation like this,” said Timothy L. O’Brien, a reporter who wrote a biography of Trump, adding that the longtime real estate mogul had contended with extensive litigation in his business career, but never legal threats of this scale. “The kind of legal scrutiny they’re getting right now — and the potential consequences of that scrutiny — are unlike anything Donald Trump or his children have ever faced.”

## The special counsel probe

Mueller’s investigation began in May 2017 after Trump fired FBI Director James B. Comey. The special counsel’s mandate: to investigate Russian interference in the 2016 campaign and whether the Kremlin worked with Trump associates. Mueller is also examining whether the president has sought to obstruct the Russia probe.

So far, Mueller has charged 33 people. That includes 26 Russian nationals — some of whom allegedly stole emails and other data from U.S. political parties, others of whom allegedly sought to influence public opinion via phony social media postings. Several Trump aides have also pleaded guilty.

Paul Manafort, Trump’s former campaign chairman, was found guilty in August of tax and bank fraud charges and pleaded guilty in September to conspiracy and obstruction charges unrelated to his work for the campaign. He agreed to cooperate with Mueller’s investigation — though the special counsel’s office recently asserted he has been lying to investigators.

Flynn, Trump’s former national security adviser, admitted to lying to the FBI about his conversations with the Russian ambassador. Rick Gates, Trump’s former deputy campaign chairman, admitted to conspiracy and lying to the FBI. Former foreign policy adviser George Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his Russian contacts. Cohen admitted to lying about efforts to build a Trump project in Moscow that lasted into Trump’s presidential run. All agreed to cooperate with investigators.

It’s unclear where Mueller’s inquiry is headed — and whether it will end with a spate of indictments reaching further into Trump’s world or with a written report submitted to the Justice Department.

Trump has repeatedly denied there was any “collusion” between his associates and Russia and has attacked the investigation as a fishing expedition led by politically biased prosecutors. Advisers said he has recently ramped up his attacks — hoping to undermine confidence in Mueller’s work — because he believes the probe is at a critical stage.

## The campaign-finance investigation

Separately, federal prosecutors in Manhattan have pursued another investigation that emerged out of the 2016 campaign: hush-money payments Cohen made to two women who said they’d had extramarital affairs with Trump.

Cohen, who was sentenced Wednesday to three years in prison for what a judge called a “veritable smorgasbord of criminal conduct,” pleaded guilty to campaign-finance violations in connection to the payments. Cohen also named who told him to pay off the women: Trump. “He was very concerned about how this would affect the election,” Cohen told ABC News in an interview that aired Friday.

Trump has denied he directed Cohen to break the law by buying the silence of former Playboy playmate Karen McDougal and adult-film star Stormy Daniels. He also said Cohen, as his lawyer, bore responsibility for any campaign finance violations. “I never directed him to do anything wrong,” Trump told Fox News on Thursday. “Whatever he did, he did on his own.”

Prosecutors also revealed Wednesday they had struck a non-prosecution agreement with AMI, the company that produces the National Enquirer tabloid, for its role in the scheme. The company admitted it had helped pay off one of Trump’s accusers during the campaign. It said it had done so in “cooperation, consultation, and concert with” one or more members of Trump’s campaign, according to court filings.

It is unclear whether prosecutors will pursue charges against campaign or Trump Organization officials as part of the case. But at the White House, advisers have fretted that this case — and not Mueller’s — could be the biggest threat to Trump’s presidency. House Democrats have already indicated the campaign-finance allegations could be potential fodder for impeachment proceedings.

## Scrutiny of the inaugural committee

The nearly $107 million donated to Trump’s inaugural committee has drawn the attention of Mueller, who has probed whether illegal foreign contributions went to help put on the festivities. The special counsel already referred one such case to federal prosecutors in Washington. In late August, an American political consultant, W. Samuel Patten, admitted steering $50,000 from a Ukrainian politician to the inaugural committee through a straw donor. Patten pleaded guilty to failing to register as a foreign lobbyist and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors.

On Friday, Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-Calif.), the incoming chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said his panel plans to investigate possible “illicit foreign funding or involvement in the inauguration.”

The Wall Street Journal reported this week that federal prosecutors in New York are examining whether the inaugural committee misspent funds. The Washington Post has not independently confirmed that report.

Officials with the committee, which was chaired by Trump’s friend Tom Barrack, said they were in full compliance “with all applicable laws and disclosure obligations” and have not received any records requests from prosecutors. White House spokesman Hogan Gidley told reporters this week that questions about the committee’s practices have “nothing to do with the president of the United States.”

## The emoluments lawsuits

Trump also faces a pair of civil lawsuits alleging he has violated the Constitution by doing business with foreign and state governments while in office. Trump still owns his private company, though he says he’s given up day-to-day control to his sons Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump. Since the 2016 election, Trump’s businesses have hosted parties for foreign embassies, hosted Malaysia’s prime minister and Maine’s governor, and rented more than 500 rooms to lobbyists paid by the Saudi government.

The lawsuits allege that such transactions violate a Constitutional ban on presidents taking emoluments, or payments, from foreign or state governments. One complaint was filed by congressional Democrats; the other by the Democratic attorneys general of Maryland and the District of Columbia.

“What we want to do is be able to tie the flow of money from foreign and domestic sovereigns into Donald Trump’s pocketbook,” said Karl A. Racine (D), the D.C. attorney general. He called the emoluments clauses “our country’s first corruption law.”

The plaintiffs are seeking to have Trump barred from doing business with governments. But the more immediate threat for Trump and his company is the legal discovery process, in which the plaintiffs are seeking documents detailing his foreign customers, how much they paid — and how much wound up in the president’s pocket. So far, Trump — who is represented by the Justice Department and a private attorney — has failed to get the cases dismissed or block discovery.

Earlier this month, the two attorneys general sent Trump’s company a raft of subpoenas. They expect to get answers early next year.

## New York state inquiries

In New York, where Trump’s business is based, incoming Attorney General Letitia James (D) is preparing to launch several investigations into aspects of his company. “We will use every area of the law to investigate President Trump and his business transactions and that of his family as well,” James told NBC News. She said she wanted to look into whether Trump had violated the emoluments clause by doing business with foreign governments in New York and examine allegations detailed by the New York Times that Trump’s company engaged in questionable tax practices for decades.

New York state’s tax agency has also said it is considering an investigation into the company’s tax practices.

Earlier this year, New York Attorney General Barbara Underwood filed suit against Trump and his three eldest children, alleging “persistently illegal conduct” at the Donald J. Trump Foundation, a case spurred by reporting by The Post in 2016. Trump is accused of violating several state charity laws, including using his charity’s money to pay off legal settlements for his for-profit businesses. He used the foundation to buy a portrait of himself that was hung up at one of his resorts. Trump also allegedly allowed his presidential campaign to dictate the charity’s giving in 2016 — despite laws that bar charities from participating in campaigns.

The attorney general has asked for Trump to pay at least $2.8 million in penalties and restitution and that he be barred from running a charity in New York for 10 years. Trump has called the suit politically motivated and “ridiculous.” Last month, a New York state judge denied a request by Trump’s attorneys to throw out the suit.

Meanwhile, a defamation suit against Trump by former “Apprentice” contestant Summer Zervos has also quietly advanced through the New York courts. A judge has allowed Zervos to seek discovery — including possibly deposing the president — as the two sides wait for a panel of New York appellate judges to rule on Trump’s latest move to block the lawsuit.

Trump has argued that, as a sitting president, he is immune from the claims in both the foundation and Zervos case. He maintains that the 1997 Supreme Court decision in Clinton v. Jones — which said that presidents do not have immunity from civil litigation — does not apply in state courts.

Alice Crites, Josh Dawsey, Jonathan O’Connell, Tom Hamburger, Michael Kranish, Carol D. Leonnig, Elise Viebeck and John Wagner contributed to this report.

# The 35 Trump Tweets That Defined 2018

The president spends a lot of time on Twitter, so where better to turn to understand the past 12 months of his embattled administration

By RYAN BORT

Rolling Stone Magazine

Just as Trump has done more Adamage to ISIS than all recent presidents, as he tweeted last week, the president has also spent more time on social media than anyone to occupy the Oval Office. Trump’s prolific Twitter presence has afforded Americans a unique look into how he processes current events. This can be exhausting, infuriating and even incriminating. Special Counsel Robert Mueller has reportedly taken the president’s feed into consideration as he investigates the Trump campaign’s ties to Russia, and whether Trump may have obstructed justice.

The president’s Twitter habit can also be informative, offering a stunning timeline of how he has bobbed and weaved his way around controversy after controversy, with excuses leading to actions, leading to more excuses, leading to more actions - all in the service of saving his own ass. So, with the hope of gleaning some sort of insight into one of the most turbulent and confusing years in modern American history, we’ve anthologized Trump’s most notable tweets of 2018, month by month. This may have been a bad idea.

JANUARY

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the ANuclear Button is on his desk at all times. Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!

4:49 PM - Jan 2, 2018

Trump’s eventual summit with Kim Jong-un released tension from what had become an increasingly concerning war of words between two of the world’s most petulant leaders. On New Year’s Day, Kim warned that the United States is Awithin the range of our nuclear strike and a nuclear button is always on the desk of my office.@ Trump countered deftly, noting that he has a bigger button. Twelve months and a handshake later, North Korea’s nuclear program is still very much active, and Trump is showing White House guests the Alove letters@ he has received from Kim claiming that it’s not.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Now that Russian collusion, after one year of intense study, has proven to be a total hoax on the American public, the Democrats and their lapdogs, the Fake News Mainstream Media, are taking out the old Ronald Reagan playbook and screaming mental stability and intelligence.....

4:19 AM - Jan 6, 2018

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump ....Actually, throughout my life, my two greatest assets have been mental stability and being, like, really smart. Crooked Hillary Clinton also played these cards very hard and, as everyone knows, went down in flames. I went from VERY successful businessman, to top T.V. Star.....

4:27 AM - Jan 6, 2018

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump ....to President of the United States (on my first try). I think that would qualify as not smart, but genius....and a very stable genius at that!

4:30 AM - Jan 6, 2018

The president’s mental illness became a mainstream talking point following the release of Fire and Fury, Michael Wolff’s questionable account of the Trump administration’s first year. Wolff portrayed Trump as an incompetent moron, leading the president to rant about how his greatest assets are Amental stability and being, like, really smart. He also coined the phrase Avery stable genius.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Beautiful weather all over our great country, a perfect day for all Women to March. Get out there now to celebrate the historic milestones and unprecedented economic success and wealth creation that has taken place over the last 12 months. Lowest female unemployment in 18 years!

10:51 AM - Jan 20, 2018

It’s hard to tell here whether he is taking a sarcastic jab at the Women’s March, or if the idea that those marching were doing so in praise of his first year in office somehow wormed its way into his brain. Either way, in 2018, well over a million people marched for women’s rights around the United States across several highly publicized rallies. The 2019 edition will take place on January 19th.

FEBRUARY

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump WITCH HUNT!

4:49 AM - Feb 27, 2018

Slow month.

MARCH

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump The United States has an $800 Billion Dollar Yearly Trade Deficit because of our Avery stupid trade deals and policies. Our jobs and wealth are being given to other countries that have taken advantage of us for years. They laugh at what fools our leaders have been. No more!

9:43 AM - Mar 3, 2018

One of the most frightening qualities of Trump the Politician is that he actually follows through on the harebrained ideas he blurts out at rallies. After complaining for years about how the United States is being ripped off by other nations, he decided in 2018 to plunge the nation into a global trade war. The first major step came on March 1st, when he defied advisers by announcing massive tariffs on imported steel and aluminum. The affected nations imposed retaliatory tariffs. Several American industries suffered, and continue to suffer, as tariffs remain in place.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump The new Fake News narrative is that there is CHAOS in the White House. Wrong! People will always come & go, and I want strong dialogue before making a final decision. I still have some people that I want to change (always seeking perfection). There is no Chaos, only great Energy!

4:55 AM - Mar 6, 2018

For those worried that it may be a bad thing to close the year with an acting attorney general, an acting chief of staff and an acting defense secretary to go along with a partial government shutdown, don’t worry; the president is simply in the process of A seeking perfection, as he was in March when economic adviser Gary Cohn left the White House following Trump’s tariff scheme.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Crazy Joe Biden is trying to act like a tough guy. Actually, he is weak, both mentally and physically, and yet he threatens me, for the second time, with physical assault. He doesn’t know me, but he would go down fast and hard, crying all the way. Don’t threaten people Joe!

2:19 AM - Mar 22, 2018

File this one away if Biden decides to run in 2020.

APRIL

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump While Security spending was somewhat more than his predecessor, Scott Pruitt has received death threats because of his bold actions at EPA. Record clean Air & Water while saving USA Billions of Dollars. Rent was about market rate, travel expenses OK. Scott is doing a great job!

4:03 PM - Apr 7, 2018

Trump’s first Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Scott Pruitt, may have been the most corrupt Cabinet official in American history. Not only did he have little-to-no regard for the environment (in February he mused that climate change may actually be good for humanity), Pruitt wasted government money on lavish accouterments, lied about meetings, fired staff for questioning his ethics and generally abused his position to an awe-inspiring degree. The president stuck with Pruitt until the very end. He resigned on July 5th.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump President Xi and I will always be friends, no matter what happens with our dispute on trade. China will take down its Trade Barriers because it is the right thing to do. Taxes will become Reciprocal & a deal will be made on Intellectual Property. Great future for both countries!

4:12 AM - Apr 8, 2018

What matters most about the president’s trade war with China are the friendships he makes along the way.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump

 Apr 21, 2018 So funny, the Democrats have sued the Republicans for Winning. Now he R’s counter and force them to turn over a treasure trove of material, including Servers and Emails!

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump The Washington Post said I refer to Jeff Sessions as AMr. Magoo@ and Rod Rosenstein as AMr. Peepers. This is according to people with whom the president has spoken. There are no such people and don’t know these characters...just more Fake & Disgusting News to create ill will!

12:13 PM - Apr 21, 2018

Fake News at its worst.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump MAGA! https://twitter.com/kanyewest/status/989227154993963009 Y

1:18 PM - Apr 25, 2018

Trump tweeting AMAGA!@ on top of a Kanye West tweet that has since been deleted may be the most succinct distillation of 2018.

Six months later, West would visit the Oval Office to explain to Trump why his AMake America Great Again@ hat made him feel like Superman. He also showed the president designs to a hydrogen-powered super plane he dubbed the iPlane 1.

MAY

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Who’s going to give back the young and beautiful lives (and others) that have been devastated and destroyed by the phony Russia Collusion Witch Hunt? They journeyed down to Washington, D.C., with stars in their eyes and wanting to help our nation...They went back home in tatters!

4:41 AM - May 27, 2018

Special Counsel Mueller’s investigation has resulted in the indictments of dozens of individuals, including several who were intimately involved with Trump’s campaign. To Trump, bringing people to justice for lying to the United States government constitutes a betrayal, and career criminals like Paul Manafort, who Ajourneyed down to Washington with hopes of making America a better place, were treated unfairly. For shame, federal investigators.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Sorry, I’ve got to start focusing my energy on North Korea Nuclear, bad Trade Deals, VA Choice, the Economy, rebuilding the Military, and so much more, and not on the Rigged Russia Witch Hunt that should be investigating Clinton/Russia/FBI/Justice/Obama/Comey/Lynch etc.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Bob Iger of ABC called Valerie Jarrett to let her know that AABC does not tolerate comments like those made by Roseanne Barr. Gee, he never called President Donald J. Trump to apologize for the HORRIBLE statements made and said about me on ABC. Maybe I just didn’t get the call?

7:31 AM - May 30, 2018

Trump apologized to a nation thirsting for more rants against the Mueller investigation, claiming that he simply has too many other presidential responsibilities, like wondering whether Disney CEO Bob Iger will call him to apologize in the wake of ABC firing Roseanne Barr.

JUNE

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Congresswoman Maxine Waters, an extraordinarily low IQ person, has become, together with Nancy Pelosi, the Face of the Democrat Party. She has just called for harm to supporters, of which there are many, of the Make America Great Again movement. Be careful what you wish for Max!

9:11 AM - Jun 25, 2018

It wasn’t a good year for Trump attacking the intelligence of C and, in this case, threatening C people of color who oppose him. In January, Rep. Waters will become the chair of the House Financial Services Committee, a position that will give her the power to subpoena the president’s tax returns.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump HOUSE REPUBLICANS SHOULD PASS THE STRONG BUT FAIR IMMIGRATION BILL, KNOWN AS GOODLATTE II, IN THEIR AFTERNOON VOTE TODAY, EVEN THOUGH THE DEMS WON’T LET IT PASS IN THE SENATE. PASSAGE WILL SHOW THAT WE WANT STRONG BORDERS & SECURITY WHILE THE DEMS WANT OPEN BORDERS ‘ CRIME. WIN!

4:39 AM - Jun 27, 2018

Trump’s inability to pass significant border legislation despite Republicans controlling the House and the Senate is mostly his own fault. After signing an executive order that ostensibly placed the onus on Congress to end the administration’s family separation policy, the president offered little guidance to House Republicans. After failing to endorse either immigration bill put forth by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), and even telling Republicans to Astop wasting their time with immigration, Trump abruptly endorsed a compromised version of the bill the morning it was set to go to vote. It was too late, though. Nothing passed. As the year draws to a close, Trump’s relationship with Congress hasn’t gotten any less confused, nor will it once Democrats take over next month.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Prior to departing Wisconsin, I was briefed on the shooting at Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. Thank you to all of the First Responders who are currently on the scene.

12:49 PM - Jun 28, 2018

Trump spent plenty of time in demonizing the media in 2018. A man was arrested for threatening to kill staffers at the Boston Globe after Trump attacked the paper on Twitter. Another man was arrested for attempting to bomb CNN, which Trump has repeatedly admonished, along with several prominent Democratic figures. In June, five members of the Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, were killed by a lone gunman. Trump offered thoughts and prayers, but didn’t refrain from referring to the media as the Aenemy of the people. When he did so in early December, Josh McKerrow, a photojournalist for the Gazette, responded with a story about how every year he does a story on the holiday decorations at the governor’s residence, and how this year was his first year doing it without Wendi Winter, who was killed in June. AI cried on and off all day, McKerrow wrote. AI miss her very much. I’m comforted that in a way she’s still with me, when I do the work that she loved to do. Journalism. Patriotic, truth telling, American. We’ll keep on doing the work.

JULY

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump After having written many best selling books, and somewhat priding myself on my ability to write, it should be noted that the Fake News constantly likes to pore over my tweets looking for a mistake. I capitalize certain words only for emphasis, not b/c they should be capitalized!

3:13 PM - Jul 3, 2018

Among the words and phrases Trump has capitalized in 2018: Big Deals, Drones, Drugs, Gangs, Technology, Not True, Never Ending Wars, Concrete Wall, Ocean Area Fence, Steel Slat Barrier, Judicial Activism, Gasoline Prices, Brutal and Extended Cold Blast, Country, Nation, City, Great U.S.A., Enemy of the People, Approval Rating, Election Theft, Big Victory, Packed House, Firefighters, Policeman, Rat, Nuclear Button, Holiday Season, Strong Dollars, Smocking Gun, Scott Free, Angry Dems, Presidential Harassment, Soy Beans, Prison Time, Ridiculous, Congressional Subpoena, Maximum Criminal Penalties, JOY TO THE WORLD.

AUGUST

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, Don Lemon. He made Lebron look smart, which isn’t easy to do. I like Mike!

7:37 PM - Aug 3, 2018

Not a Good Year for Trump Insulting the Intelligence of people of color, Part II.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump California wildfires are being magnified & made so much worse by the bad environmental laws which aren’t allowing massive amounts of readily available water to be properly utilized. It is being diverted into the Pacific Ocean. Must also tree clear to stop fire from spreading!

1:53 PM - Aug 6, 2018

In which Trump claims to know more about forest fire management than the forest service. He continued to do so when more fires broke out in November. All told, 2018 was the most deadly wildfire season on record in California. Trump never acknowledged that climate change may have played a role.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump As long as I campaign and/or support Senate and House candidates (within reason), they will win! I LOVE the people, & they certainly seem to like the job I’m doing. If I find the time, in between China, Iran, the Economy and much more, which I must, we will have a giant Red Wave!

7:25 AM - Aug 8, 2018

He must not have found the time.

SEPTEMBER

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump

3:42 PM - Sep 18, 2018

Perhaps the most memorable of Trump’s late-year video addresses, none of which seem to have been thought out before the camera started rolling. AThis is a tough hurricane, Trump said in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence. AOne of the wettest we’ve ever seen from the standpoint of water. Rarely have we had an experience like it, and it certainly is not good.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Judge Kavanaugh showed America exactly why I nominated him. His testimony was powerful, honest, and riveting. Democrats’ search and destroy strategy is disgraceful and this process has been a total sham and effort to delay, obstruct, and resist. The Senate must vote!

2:46 PM - Sep 27, 2018

Judge Kavanaugh, like Manafort, was just another idealist with stars in his eyes before the Democrats tried to ruin his life. In reality, the future Supreme Court justice’s unhinged, emotional and sarcastic testimony regarding his alleged history of sexual assault led a coalition of legal experts, including former conservative justice John Paul Stevens, to declare him unfit to serve on the nation’s highest court.

OCTOBER

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Just spoke with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia who totally denied any knowledge of what took place in their Turkish Consulate. He was with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo...

10:40 AM - Oct 16, 2018

Putin denied Russia attempted to influence the 2016 election. Trump believed him, despite the findings of the U.S intelligence community. Mohammed bin Salman denied ordering the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Trump believed him, despite the findings of the U.S. intelligence community.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump All Republicans support people with pre-existing conditions, and if they don’t, they will after I speak to them. I am in total support. Also, Democrats will destroy your Medicare, and I will keep it healthy and well!

11:43 AM - Oct 18, 2018

As it became clear that Democrats were likely to regain control of the House of Representatives, Trump resorted to flat-out lying in order to convince Americans to vote Republican. Not only does the GOP not support people with pre-existing conditions, Republicans were actively working to strip protections. Democrats will destroy your Medicare, and I will keep it healthy and well!@ wrote the president who somewhat prides himself on his ability to write.

NOVEMBER

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump

8:01 AM - Nov 2, 2018

More pre-midterms desperation. Also see: Trump promising a big tax cut for the middle class that was clearly never going to happen.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Tremendous success tonight. Thank you to all!

8:14 PM - Nov 6, 2018

Though he had been promising a Red Wave for much of 2018, the midterms saw Democrats pick up a whopping 40 seats in the House. Thank you to all!

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Of course we should have captured Osama Bin Laden long before we did. I pointed him out in my book just BEFORE the attack on the World Trade Center. President Clinton famously missed his shot. We paid Pakistan Billions of Dollars & they never told us he was living there. Fools!..

7:26 AM - Nov 19, 2018

There is no limit to how far Trump will sink when he feels he has been slighted. In this case, he diminished the killing of Osama Bin Laden because the man who oversaw the mission, Admiral William H. McRaven, had criticized him.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Brutal and Extended Cold Blast could shatter ALL RECORDS - Whatever happened to Global Warming?

4:23 PM - Nov 21, 2018

Just a reminder that the president of the United States doesn’t believe in climate change because it gets cold sometimes.

DECEMBER

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump ....I am a Tariff Man. When people or countries come in to raid the great wealth of our Nation, I want them to pay for the privilege of doing so. It will always be the best way to max out our economic power. We are right now taking in $billions in Tariffs. MAKE AMERICA RICH AGAIN

7:03 AM - Dec 4, 2018

Just a reminder that Trump doesn’t see a trade war with the world’s second-largest economy as much more than another opportunity to brand himself.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump Totally clears the President. Thank you!

3:00 PM - Dec 7, 2018

Maybe the most breathtaking of the president’s 2018 tweets came after the Southern District of New York and the special counsel’s office filed sentencing memos for Michael Cohen, Trump’s former attorney and fixer who said in court that his former boss directed him to commit felony campaign finance violations. In its memo, the SDNY wrote that it had corroborated Cohen’s claim, and that Cohen Aacted in coordination and at the direction of Trump when he made the pre-election hush money payments to bury the stories of Stormy McDaniels and Karen McDougal’s alleged affairs with the president. In other words, federal prosecutors claimed that the president committed a felony. Nothing to see here.

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump The Democrats are trying to belittle the concept of a Wall, calling it old fashioned. The fact is there is nothing else’s that will work, and that has been true for thousands of years. It’s like the wheel, there is nothing better. I know tech better than anyone, & technology.....

3:58 AM - Dec 21, 2018

Donald J. Trump  @realDonaldTrump A design of our Steel Slat Barrier which is totally effective while at the same time beautiful!

2:14 PM - Dec 21, 2018

The government is currently shut down because of Trump’s obsession with constructing a border wall. The day the shutdown became official, Trump tried to debunk claims that the wall is Aold fashioned technology by citing the enduring utility of the wheel. There is nothing better, Trump wrote of wheels before claiming that he knows tech better than anyone. Later that day, Trump tweeted a cartoon rendering of a steel slat barrier with pointy spikes on top of it. It’s unclear where the image came from, but it wasn’t one of the prototypes under consideration.

Despite knowing full well that the wall will not be funded, the government remains shut down out of some misguided show of strength from the president, depriving thousands of federal employees their holiday paychecks. Bonita Williams, a janitor at the State Department, had planned on buying her grandchildren a bike for Christmas. Her plans were snuffed out by the shutdown. My supervisor told me we won’t be getting paid, she told the Washington Post, so my bills won’t be getting paid. Happy holidays from the Trump administration.

# Sex, lies and chaos: the truth about Donald Trump's first term as US President ... and there are still two years to go

By Neil Mackay

Writer at large

The Herald

January 12, 2019

DONALD J Trump is about to mark the second anniversary of his inauguration as the 45th president of America – the halfway stage of his first term. In just 24 months, he has positioned himself as the **de facto leader of an international populist movement that stretches from the Philippines to Brazil via Hungary, Turkey, India, Bolivia, Italy, and Poland** – a movement which claims to fight for ordinary people against conniving elites.

As with nearly everything when it comes to Trump, it’s all a lie. He’s about as unelitist as a Kardashian. Trump is a tycoon born into huge inherited wealth and his policies look after the super-rich rather than the average worker. But with Trump, as with many populist movements inspired by him, it's appearance which matters, not reality.

It may sound deranged (that’s the world we live in now) but Trump is an inspirational figure. The new authoritarian leader of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, Brexiteers, the hard Hungarian right, evangelicals, alt-right conspiracists – they’ve all been either invigorated or inspired by the tone set by Trump. His anti-immigration stance, his attacks on political correctness, his sexism – it’s all set the agenda for a world drifting away from progressive values.

While what he’s doing within America is unique to America, his influence is global and he’s changing the world in frightening ways. Here’s how:

## 1 The New World Order

It was once right-wingers who screamed about the liberal left creating a New World Order of PC internationalism. Today, it’s the right restructuring how the world works. Trump is dismantling the old structures.

Throughout the last century, America – like it or not – was the beacon of democratic values across the world. After the Second World War, the planet was split into two poles – the communist east and the democratic west. Under Trump, America has pivoted towards dictatorships and autocrats, while antagonising its oldest allies. In comes the chilling figure of Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine president who salivates over extrajudicial executions, out goes Angela Merkel. Putin gets fanboy love, while Nato – the cornerstone of western security – gets put on the naughty step.

Trump’s administration is happy to see Brexit where his predecessors backed European unity. Other presidents kept the promises America made – the hallmark of diplomacy – Trump breaks deals without the bat of an eye whether it’s the Iran nuclear deal or the Paris climate accords.

Instead of tip-toeing in the middle east, he moves America’s embassy to Jerusalem. Rather than defend free trade – a concept almost symbolically American – he attacks it and opts for protectionism and trade wars.

Many of his actions – whether it's talk of Syrian withdrawal or humiliating Nato – play into the hands of Putin, adding to the belief that the Kremlin not only interfered in the US election to help Trump take the White House, but maybe has some ‘kompromat’ on the president as well.

## 2 War on Women

It’s become common for American parents to fret about the vulgarity Trump brings to their TV screens – but with Trump vulgarity is inescapable. Before he ran for President, many saw him as a bit of a sleaze, but events since have shown him up to be much more than that. It would be difficult for even his most ardent supporters to argue against claims of misogyny, and that's before we even think about the allegations of sexual assault.

Anger at such a man in the White House, prompted mass marches by millions of women. But nothing seemed to soften Trump’s attitude.

Once more Trump has upended the old standards and shown himself to be a catalyst of change – albeit change for the worse: any president before him would have been finished by the Stormy Daniels scandal (remember that one?) alone. With Trump and scandal, nothing seems to stick. He once said he could shoot someone on Fifth Avenue and not drop in the ratings. Maybe he’s right.

## 3 Chaos Theory

God knows how people survive in the Trump circle. It must be like living inside a hurricane. He creates such chaos and drama – such a fast-moving news cycle – that it’s near-impossible to keep up, and therefore ridiculously difficult to scrutinise thoroughly. In his first week in office, he signed six Executive Orders – including moving to repeal Obamacare, withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, opening up controversial oil pipelines, and planning his infamous border wall – each of which would have run as news stories for months.

There's no consistency, only chaos. The world reacts with horror to the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi – Trump shrugs his shoulders. One minute he’s bombing Syria, the next he’s pulling out. The one thing Trump does well is blind-siding the world.

The chaos he creates protects him. There are investigations into Russian interference and hush money for Stormy Daniels – both of which, during any other presidency, would have cleared the news schedules and be the only topic of debate. But with Trump they get pushed out on a daily basis alongside everything from locking children up at the border to mocking a female journalist as "low IQ", "crazy" and "bleeding badly from a face-lift".

Right now, his latest act of chaos is shutting down the federal government because he can’t get his way over the Mexican wall. As a result, federal employees are going without wages and struggling to pay their bills. Chaos leaves collateral damage.

## 4 Truth is the first casualty

Where to start? The Obama birther myth? His claims that vaccines cause autism? His flirtation with conspiracy theorists like Alex Jones from Infowars?

It’s not the fact that he’s brought conspiracy theory in from the cold which is so dangerous, though, it’s his all-out violence-inciting assault on the press – he once said a republican congressman who body-slammed a journalist was his "kind of guy". From banning CNN’s Jim Acosta from the White House, to his endless mantra of fake news when it comes to any accurate story which he doesn’t like – Trump is locked in an existential battle with journalism, a key pillar of democracy.

The best weapon he has is Twitter which he uses – like many other populist leaders – to circumvent the press and speak directly to his base. It’s the equivalent of getting your news from a drunk in a bar. Just look at the kind of loathsome stuff he sends out over social media.

Step forward Jayda Fransen, deputy leader of Britain First – who had the honour of her Islamophobic messages being retweeted by Potus. Last year, Fransen was jailed for religiously-aggravated harassment.

## 5 People now vote for pain

The first president with no government or military experience has embarked – as have so many other populist leaders – on a series of policies which will hurt his base, often the poorest in society. But they don’t care because he represents the rejection of the PC liberals they blame for wrecking their lives. Shades of Brexit abound.

Trump doesn’t believe in climate change ... or gun control, in fact, he thinks teachers should be armed ... his economic policies help the rich ... he’s obsessed with reviving old, dirty and dangerous industries like coal because they represent his vision of a 1950s Golden Age when men were men, and they died from coal dust inhalation. He’s axed Obamacare, and he’s eyeing up restrictions on mercury pollution. To be honest, the author of The Hunger Games would have trouble inventing this domestic manifesto.

## 6 Hatred of the Other

Whether it’s baiting black sportsmen for taking a knee, making an equivalence between Nazi protesters in Charlottesville and counter-demonstrators, or trying to establish a Muslim travel ban, Trump plays to the worst nativist instincts of his base. In fact, it’s really only shoring up his base that he cares about.

His flirtation with white nationalism has given rise to players once consigned to the fringes – from Breitbart’s alt-right svengali Steve Bannon to Richard Spencer who infamously hollered "Hail Trump" in front of a crowd who replied with Nazi salutes.

Perhaps the lowest point of his presidency so far – and there are so many to chose from – was the policy of separating migrant parents from their children at the border. Two children in the custody of US Border Protection have already died.

## 7 Lie Bigly, and break the law

By the end of December, the Fact Checker database found Trump had made 7645 "false or misleading claims" – aka lies. Trump lies the way most people breathe. He even lies when the evidence of his own eyes proves he’s lying – as shown when he claimed 1.5 million people came to his inauguration. At most it was 250,000 - as the thin crowds in Washington showed. But he had to be bigger and better than Obama, who’s inauguration was truly huge with an estimated 1.1 million crowd. He claims he won the popular vote during his election – even though he lost it.

Lies tend to mean flirting with the law. Already a number of key Trump staff have had their collars felt. Paul Manafort, campaign chairman, was indicted following consulting work for the pro-Russian Ukrainian government of Viktor Yanukovych. He was eventually convicted of fraud.

Amid fears of Russian interference, Lt Gen Mike Flynn, former National Security adviser – a man who once led anti-Hillary Clinton crowds chanting "lock her up" – was investigated over whether he’d taken money from foreign governments. He later pled guilty to making false statements to the FBI.

## 8 My country right or wrong

America First. Make America Great Again. The slogans nail the nativism. The irony is that many of his policies make America weaker than ever. America is no longer seen as the leader of the free world ... the free world doesn’t really have a leader anymore, though Angela Merkel held the title briefly before her government hit the ropes in Germany.

His trade wars with Europe and China only hurt working-class Americans as Brussels and Beijing respond with their own financial weapons. Right now, Trump’s trade wars are seriously imperilling British car manufacturing as exports from the UK to China slow down as the country copes with American protectionism. Many economists now think that when – not if – the next crash comes it will be thanks to Trump, the man who wrote The Art of the Deal.

## 9 Literally anything can happen

If you have no real policy, no real ideology beyond self-aggrandisement, then you pretty much have to wing it day to day if you’re president. And so, we have policy by the moment.

One day Kim Jong-un is little Rocket Man who’s going to face fire and fury, the next day he’s Trump best buddy and the pair are in love. Out of nowhere, Trump backs torture or he’s going to overturn the constitutional guarantee that if you're born in America you have citizenship.

He’s a one-man crisis machine, and most of his ideas come from the full-fat cable news he ingests via Fox. His craziness has even been seen as a cause for the rising number of American’s reporting mental health problems.

## 10 Rip it up and start again

Destruction is Trump’s default position. He will trash anyone who gets in his way – just look at how he humiliated his Attorney General Jeff Sessions after he removed himself from the Russia probe, describing him as "weak" and "DISGRACEFUL" (he loves shouty capital letters in tweets). He is constantly getting rid of staff – so many top officials have gone that his cabinet looks like a team made from kids who never got picked for PE.

By the end of his first year, 34% of staff had resigned, been fired or reassigned. By mid-2018, 61 per cent of his senior aides had left, as had 141 staffers by the end of the year. His ex-Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, described Trump as a "f\*\*\*ing moron" after dismissal. Many former staff agree.

Whether it’s Obama’s legacy, America’s alliances, or even the norms of behaviour – Trump will destroy them. That’s Potus – and he’s still got two years to go.

## INSIDE TRUMP’S MIND

PSYCHIATRISTS are loath to diagnose Trump as it’s unethical to publicly put someone on the couch who isn’t your patient. But his behaviour is so bizarre that many are now breaking the rules. Thousands of mental health professionals signed a petition stating they believe Trump "manifests a serious mental illness that renders him psychologically incapable of competently discharging the duties of President". They also said he should be removed from office by article four of the 25th amendment – "the mad president" law.

On American news networks, it’s hard to go an evening without Trump being referred to as a "baby" or a "narcissist" – and that’s probably the most likely diagnoses: he’s a 72-year-old narcissistic baby.

But he may represent something much uglier in the collective psyche: the id, the most basic part of our consciousness – our drives, impulses, aggressions and needs. Freud called the id "the dark, inaccessible part of our personality ... a cauldron of seething excitations". Almost as if Twitter sprouted arms, legs, tiny hands and big hair, and came to life.

## WHAT NEXT?

IT’S pretty simple – he loses in 2020, he wins in 2020, or he gets impeached.

Formal efforts to start the impeachment process have been begun by Democratic Representatives Al Green and Brad Sherman. Going after Robert Mueller, the former FBI director now heading the Russian inquiry, would be the most likely catalyst for impeachment.

However, more than one commentator in America has wondered out loud if Trump would accept the impeachment process, or even leave the White House should he be defeated in 2020. A few have even fearfully speculated that his fall could spark violence on the streets from his fired-up base, a lot of whom have plenty of guns.

Trump will run for a second term – no Republican will successfully stand against him. He filed the papers to do so within hours of assuming the presidency. So far, he’s got a 2020 war chest of well over $50 million dollars.

The big question is who will the Democrats run against him? Could there be some beautiful karma as a woman like Elizabeth Warren becomes Potus 46? Or will the Dems fight fire with fire and choose a super-rich TV star?

Oprah and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson have both ruled themselves out – but anything can happen these day so it could be President Taylor Swift this time two years from now.

Only joking. I think.

About Face

# February 5, 2019 State of the Union

By Martin Hittelman

On February 5, 2019, President Donald J. Trump read his speech to the nation for 82 minutes from a teleprompter. As with all of Trump’s speeches, it was a combination of lies, half-truths, assaults on those that do not agree with him, and proclamations of America First. It was essentially an attempt to save face.

As always, it was unclear as to how much of what he read, he actually believed.

The speech was filled with gratuitous remarks, many of which contradict his past actions:

• “the end of revenge politics”;

• “Together, we can break decades of political stalemate. We can bridge old divisions, heal old wounds, build new coalitions, forge new solutions, and unlock the extraordinary promise of America’s future;”

• “The decision is ours to make;”

• funds to cure child cancer;

• “protect patients with preexisting conditions;”

• pledging new funding to “defeat AIDS in America and beyond”;

• “Exactly one century after the Congress passed the constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote, we also have more women serving in the Congress than ever before;” (most of whom won opposing him);

• “the time for trivial fights is behind us”;

• “not a Republican agenda or a Democratic agenda but an agenda for the American people;”

• “We must reject the politics of revenge, resistance, and retribution—and embrace the boundless potential of cooperation, compromise, and the common good;”

• “We must choose between greatness or gridlock, results or resistance, vision or vengeance;”

• funds made available for an infrastructure package;

• legislation for cheaper prescription drugs and paid family leave;

• “We must choose whether we will squander our inheritance or whether we will proudly declare that we are Americans. We do the incredible. We defy the impossible. We conquer the unknown;”

• “Great nations do not fight endless wars,”

And then midway through the speech he threw down the gauntlet: “If there is going to be peace and legislation, there cannot be war and investigation,” he said. “It just doesn’t work that way!” In other words, end the Mueller investigation. End the other criminal investigations of Trump friends and family corruption.

Trump went on a rant concerning the wall but made no mention of his government shutdown: “Now is the time for the Congress to show the world that America is committed to ending illegal immigration and putting the ruthless coyotes, cartels, drug dealers, and human traffickers out of business.” He then spoke of “caravans,” MS-13, and the grief-felt by families who had been (according to Trump) murdered by undocumented immigrants. He did not mention that the crime rate for undocumented immigrants is less than that of the rest of the United States population. He also used El Paso Texas as an example of “Simply put, walls work and walls save lives.” His example of El Paso as a town that went from one with a high crime rate to a town with a low crime rate after a wall was built turns out not to be the case. That lie was clearly spelled out in a number of newspaper accounts.

He then went on to say that “No issue better illustrates the divide between America’s working class and America’s political class than illegal immigration, wealthy politicians and donors push for open borders while living their lives behind walls and gates and guards.” This was a clear attempt to turn the working class against the Democrats and new immigrants. Who these donors that live behind walls and gates and guards are was not made clear.

In addition to appealing to the racists, he also made an appeal to the evangelical right by calling on Congress to outlaw late-term abortions. He attacked “legislation that would allow a baby to be ripped from the mother’s womb moments before birth.” He considered abortion to be the execution of the fetus.

Trump made the outrageous claim that “If I had not been elected president of the United States, we would right now, in my opinion, be in a major war with North Korea with potentially millions of people killed.“ Despite the concerns of his intelligence agencies, Trump still believes that North Korea would likely not denuclearize. He announced a planned meeting with Kim Jong Un whose “relationship with Kim Jong Un is a good one.”

Trump made an attack on what he considers “socialism” and “new calls to adopt socialism in our country.” He attempted to describe the economic situation in Venezuela as a result of socialism rather than the United States efforts to destroy the country’s economy and the low price of oil. He then ties it to the democratic socialism of Bernie Sanders (which actually is closer to the good government policies of the Scandinavian countries). The Sanders approach is more like John Lennon reading Karl Marx socialism.

Trump then declared that “America was founded on liberty and independence, not government coercion, domination, and control.” “Tonight, we renew our resolve that America will never be a socialist country.” Meanwhile he continues to celebrate his elimination of regulations that protect the American people from all kinds of destructive practices.

Finally, Trump did not mention global warming or his attack on science.

# Middle of March 2019

BY JAKE SHERMAN, ANNA PALMER AND DANIEL LIPPMAN

Politico

March 12, 2019

**DRIVING THE DAY**

THE WINLESS FIRST QUARTER ... It's the middle of March -- almost the end of the first quarter of 2019 -- and here's what PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP has going on:

THE NORTH KOREA summit blew up. ... CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATIONS are finally taking hold, and getting more serious. ... THE PRESIDENT'S party is turning on him on Capitol Hill. The White House is scrambling to convince Senate Republicans to stick by the president when it comes to his emergency declaration at the border. ...

... THE PRESIDENT'S top trade adviser testified Tuesday that there are still "major issues" in the United States' talks with China

## (NYT). .. Lighthizer Casts Doubts on China Trade Talks as ‘Major Issues’ Go Unresolved

Sarah Silbiger/The New York Times

By Alan Rappeport

March 12, 2019

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s top trade negotiator raised doubts on Tuesday that a trade agreement with China was within reach, saying that “major issues” must still be resolved and that it was impossible at this point to predict success.

Robert Lighthizer, the United States trade representative, told lawmakers on the Senate Finance Committee that he could not predict when, or even if, a deal would be reached but said that he hoped the negotiations were in the “final weeks.” “I don’t know when something’s going to happen,” Mr. Lighthizer said. “We’re either going to have a good result or we’re going to have a bad result before too long.”

Mr. Lighthizer said there would be no agreement if outstanding issues were not resolved in “a way that’s beneficial to the United States.”

His comments contrasted sharply with Mr. Trump’s more optimistic take last month, when he said that “significant progress” had been made in resolving the yearlong trade war with China and that he would not raise tariffs on Chinese goods. Mr. Trump predicted that he would soon meet with President Xi Jinping of China for a signing ceremony at Mar-a-Lago, the president’s Florida resort.

But administration officials have since become less sanguine about the potential for a quick deal, and Mr. Trump has indicated that he is prepared to “walk” from a deal if it is not in the United States’ interest.

On Monday, a White House spokeswoman said no date had been set for a signing ceremony. On Tuesday, Mr. Lighthizer would not commit to a timetable for wrapping up the talks.

China has been wary about committing to a meeting between Mr. Xi and Mr. Trump before a firm agreement is in place. While the United States and China have made progress on the talks, Beijing continues to resist demands by the Trump administration that the Chinese believe could undermine national sovereignty or economic development.

Republicans and Democrats on the Finance Committee pressed Mr. Lighthizer for details about how or whether the White House would end a tariff war that has taken a toll on financial markets and the United States’ agricultural sector. Mr. Lighthizer said the two countries were still trying to work out how an agreement would be enforced and how far the United States would go in rolling back Mr. Trump’s tariffs on $250 billion of Chinese

Democrats have been pressuring the Trump administration to be more hawkish on China and not to settle for a quick deal to end the trade dispute. Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, the top Democrat on the committee, tried unsuccessfully to get Mr. Lighthizer to commit to keeping tariffs in place until China had demonstrated that it could keep its promises. Mr. Lighthizer refused to reveal whether the United States was pushing for such a policy, or whether it would lift its tariffs altogether once the deal was struck.

The United States wants China to commit to lowering trade barriers, ending the forced transfer of intellectual property in deals with American companies and scaling back subsidies of state-owned enterprises. It also wants China to promise to end competitive devaluation of its currency and be more transparent on foreign exchange matters.

While Mr. Trump and other top economic advisers like Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, and Larry Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council, have expressed optimism that a deal is close, Mr. Lighthizer has been far more cautious in his assessment of the negotiations.

Last month, Mr. Mnuchin said in the Oval Office that an agreement was reached on currency, but Mr. Lighthizer said that while there had been progress on that front, nothing had been finalized. “Nothing is ever done until everything is done,” he said.

“Lighthizer offers a far more grounded prognosis of the likelihood of success than President Trump and others in the administration recently have,” said Henrietta Treyz, director of economic policy at the investment advisory firm Veda Partners. “Without fail, Lighthizer makes sure to acknowledge that failure and success are both options with China.”

Mr. Lighthizer told lawmakers on Tuesday that China was pushing hard for all American tariffs to be removed, but that no decision had been made yet. The United States wants to maintain the right to impose tariffs if China is not living up to its commitments, raising the prospect that Mr. Trump could again levy taxes on Chinese goods if he grows unhappy with China’s behavior.

Figuring out how to enforce the trade agreement continues to be one of the biggest obstacles. Mr. Lighthizer on Tuesday outlined a situation in which American and Chinese officials would meet throughout the year and raise concerns of companies in their respective countries. The Trump administration had been pushing an approach that would force China to abdicate its ability to retaliate against new American tariffs. However, Mr. Lighthizer suggested that either country could impose tariffs if obligations created by the agreement were not being met.

Trump administration officials have said little about what China could get out of a deal with the United States, but Mr. Lighthizer noted that they were looking for the removal of tariffs, which have begun to hurt the Chinese economy, and some improved access to the United States’ markets.

Mr. Lighthizer also offered a fairly downbeat assessment of the administration’s other trade fights, including talks to remove metals tariffs on Canada and Mexico and efforts to strike a trade pact with the European Union.

Mr. Lighthizer said he had been trying to come up with a “sweet spot” that would most likely entail quotas, rather than tariffs, on steel and aluminum imports from Canada and Mexico but that would continue protecting the United States’ domestic metal industries. Canada has said that it does not believe that any trade barriers on metals are warranted.

Negotiations with the European Union on a new free-trade agreement could also be derailed by a dispute over whether agricultural products will be included in the pact. The United States is demanding that farmers have more access to European markets, but the European Union has insisted that is not on the table.

“We’re at a stalemate,” Mr. Lighthizer said. “We’ll see how that develops.”

He also acknowledged that American farmers were losing market share in Japan, as countries that remained in the Trans-Pacific Partnership begin benefiting from lower tariffs on exports to Japan. Mr. Trump pulled out of the partnership within days of taking office, and Mr. Lighthizer said that working out a trade deal with Japan remains a high priority.

But for now, Mr. Lighthizer is keeping most of his attention on China. He said that he and Mr. Mnuchin had spoken to their Chinese counterparts on Monday night by telephone and that he planned to do so again on Wednesday.

“We are working more or less continuously,” he said..

## PROGRESSIVE HOUSE DEMOCRATS are saying that the trade deal the president cut with Mexico and Canada is not good enough, and talks should be reopened

(POLITICO ). ... Liberal wing of Democrats wants changes to NAFTA replacement

By SABRINA RODRIGUEZ

03/12/2019

The Congressional Progressive Caucus wants President Donald Trump to reopen the new North American trade agreement to address the caucus' concerns — though the group has not officially opposed the deal.

Rep. Mark Pocan, co-chair of the caucus, first announced on Tuesday that the group was taking a position "against the current proposal." The Wisconsin Democrat later backtracked, saying that members of the group have not taken an official position but "we have serious concerns with the text of the USMCA in its current form."

Pocan added that he and Progressive Caucus co-chair Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.) believe the deal "should be reopened, so that we can deliver a progressive trade deal in line with our principles."

"It’s no secret that any trade deal will need the support of the Progressive Caucus to pass the House — so we expect USTR Lighthizer to work with us to make the necessary changes," Pocan said.

Some House Democrats have been staking out their positions on the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement in recent weeks. Prevailing concerns have centered on how the pact’s labor and environmental standards will be enforced. Several lawmakers have also been critical of intellectual property protections that they say could lock in high prescription drug prices.

“We want to make sure we have a bill that works for labor, for the environment, for consumers. We especially find the provisions around pharma very egregious," Pocan told reporters earlier Tuesday.

Pocan said their concern about pharmaceuticals “goes beyond caucus members and we’re going to be taking a very strong lead on that.” He also acknowledged that there’s a “slight improvement” in the labor language compared with NAFTA, but that it would be “meaningless” without strong enforcement mechanisms.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus opposition could complicate White House efforts to get USMCA approved by Congress, given that the group has more than 90 members.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, with the guidance from her party members, will play a lead role in determining the future of the agreement. So far, she has echoed Democratic concerns but has not offered a definitive position.

Under so-called fast-track rules, each chamber will hold a straight up-or-down vote, but lawmakers won't be able to attach amendments once the bill is introduced. Pelosi could shut down consideration of the deal by removing it from the "fast track" procedure Congress agreed to.

Lighthizer is scheduled to meet with the House Democratic caucus on Wednesday for a full presentation on the deal.

Alice Ollstein contributed to this report.

... EVEN MORE SO, this White House does not appear to be driving for anything at the moment. Sure, divided government is tough -- way tougher perhaps than the president's advisers said in the wake of the election.

## What are Trump’s Priorities?

But here's a THOUGHT EXERCISE: What is the White House's top proactive priority at this moment? And what do you see them doing -- either publicly or privately -- to achieve this?

Happy Wednesday. WHAT'S ON TRUMP'S MIND -- @realDonaldTrump at 12:27 a.m.: "So many records being set with respect to our Economy. Unemployment numbers among BEST EVER. A beautiful thing to watch!"

NEW POLITICO/MORNING CONSULT POLL -- STEVE SHEPARD: "On the eve of Congress' unprecedented rebuke of President Donald Trump, **a majority of voters continue to oppose his national emergency declaration at the southern border,** according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll.

"The poll shows that Trump has failed to build support for his declaration in the face of congressional opposition, with the results essentially unchanged since he signed an order to reallocate military funds toward erecting a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Only 38 percent of voters support the declaration, the poll shows, down 1 point over the past three weeks. In the new poll, 52 percent of voters are opposed to the declaration, up 1 point from last month." POLITICO

STATE OF PLAY -- WAPO'S SEUNG MIN KIM and ERICA WERNER:

## "White House, GOP senators negotiating a deal to avert defeat on emergency order":

"The White House is privately negotiating with Senate Republicans who want to rein in the emergency powers of President Trump and his successors — which could lead to the surprise defeat of a Democratic resolution rejecting Trump's emergency declaration at the border. That would mark a dramatic change in fortunes for Trump, who had been on track for an embarrassing defeat later this week in the GOP-controlled Senate in a confrontation with Congress over Trump's border wall.

"Key to quelling the GOP revolt is legislation drafted by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) that tries to claw back some emergency powers to Congress and whether the White House endorses some version of it. That would give Republicans who are uneasy about the constitutionality of the Feb. 15 declaration — yet nervous about publicly rebuking Trump — some political cover to side with the president." WaPo

FOR YOUR RADAR -- "Trump administration preparing to close international immigration offices," by WaPo's Maria Sacchetti and Nick Miroff: "The Trump administration is preparing to shutter all international offices of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, a move that could slow the processing of family visa applications, foreign adoptions and citizenship petitions from members of the military stationed abroad.

"USCIS Director L. Francis Cissna said in an email to staff Tuesday that he is working to transfer those duties — now performed by employees worldwide — to domestic offices and the State Department's embassies and consulates." WaPo

## THE LATEST ON BOEING ...

KATHRYN WOLFE: "Pilots complained at least 5 times about Boeing 737 MAX problems, records show": "Pilots in the U.S. complained at least 5 times in recent months about problems controlling their Boeing 737 MAX 8 jets during critical moments of flight, federal records show, adding to questions raised by deadly crashes involving that model of jetliner in Ethiopia and Indonesia.

"Some of the incidents appear to involve the same anti-stall system that has come up as a potential cause of October's Indonesia crash, according to a review of a Federal Aviation Administration incident database that lets pilots self-report trouble. Investigators have not said whether the same technology had emerged as a possible cause of Sunday's crash in Ethiopia, although both involved airliners that mysteriously plunged to the ground minutes after takeoff." POLITICO

Former Transportation Secretary RAY LAHOOD to WaPo: "Those planes should be pulled down and inspected. The flying public is owed that." WaPo

-- WSJ'S SCOTT MCCARTNEY: "Boeing 737 MAX: The Latest Example of a Passive DOT": "Thirty-five Congressional mandates sit unanswered, on everything from minimum seat space to secondary barriers protecting cockpits. The top job at the Federal Aviation Administration has been open for 14 months. Enforcement fines against major U.S. airlines have dropped 88% in the past two years, even as three-hour tarmac delays have more than doubled. The Transportation Department under Secretary Elaine Chao has seemingly been delayed on a number of issues important to travelers." WSJ

# Is Trump This Dumb?

Is Trump This Dumb? Or is he simply delusional? Or does he not know the difference between what is true and what is not? Or is his cheating ingrained?

By Martin Hittelman

April 4, 2019

Here are some of the latest insights into Trump’s head as reported in the last couple of days:

Trump doesn’t know Puerto Rico is part of the USA.

Trump is corrupt, but “too dumb to meet the specific intent requirement of the U.S. criminal code”

Donald Trump Is Never More Donald Trump Than When He's Cheating At Golf and when he claims club championships in which he never participated.

Trump claims wind farms cause cancer (they don’t)

Trump Again Claims His Father Was German – “Born in a wonderful place in Germany” (his father was born in New York.

Trump claims he has a wonderful Healthcare Plan – which he will reveal after he is reelected.

“If Mexico doesn’t help, that’s okay. We’ll tariff their cars.” “If that doesn’t work, we’ll close the border.” “We’re going to give them a one year warning.”

OMG

# Trump is floundering disastrously on multiple fronts. Stop pretending he’s in control.

By Greg Sargent

Opinion writer

April 5, 2019

Washington Post

Because so many of us got it so wrong in 2016, there’s a tendency among many commentators to reflexively assume President Trump possesses some kind of hidden, magical sway over the political environment that we’re all missing.

But if there’s anything that should shatter this illusion, it’s the events of this particular moment.

When Trump brashly proclaimed “**total exoneration**” based on his attorney general’s four-page summary of the special counsel’s findings, it was widely proclaimed that Trump and Republicans were now “turning the tables” and going “on offense” against the media and Democrats for supposedly blowing the Russia scandal. Some in the media flagellated themselves upon Trump’s demand, and others absurdly overstated the scale of Trump’s new command of the political narrative.

Yet now new reports have badly damaged that story line by revealing that some of Robert S. Mueller III’s investigators say **Attorney General William P. Barr’s letter underplayed just how damaging their findings really are for Trump** — and that they prepared summaries of their findings, expressly for public release, that Barr did not divulge.

## Why the Mueller report redactions could stir a legal fight

Barr is now facing sharp criticism by some in the legal community for his handling of this affair. And Democrats are now demanding these summaries, as well as communications with the special counsel about Barr’s decision-making. Whether or not these are forthcoming, it’s clear Democrats have new openings to pressure Barr for much greater disclosure than before.

Politico now reports that some Republicans are privately frustrated with the White House for squandering whatever political lift Trump was supposed to get from the Barr letter. It isn’t just that this story line has gone off the rails; it’s also that the president has committed massive pratfalls on two other fronts: health care and immigration.

## A disaster on health care

On health care, Trump abruptly threw in with a quixotic lawsuit that, if successful, would unleash immense damage throughout the health-care system, triggering anxiety among Republicans who just got wiped out in midterm elections that were all about preexisting conditions. Trump then blithely suggested Republicans would come up with a plan that would keep those protections, which unleashed further dread within the GOP.

Trump than rapidly backed down on that promise, vowing **Republicans would offer a plan once they won the 2020 elections** — which ensured those elections will be all about health care, again unleashing great consternation among them.

What’s crucial is why this happened. Politico reports that acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney appealed to Trump to embrace this lawsuit to appear to be taking control of events: Mulvaney has complained that the White House is too often on the defensive, taking punches instead of setting the agenda in Washington, according to a person with direct knowledge of one such conversation. Mulvaney has encouraged Trump to take aggressive moves that will appeal to his base, including the new assault on Obamacare.

We also know from previous reporting that Mulvaney and others manipulated Trump into believing that if the lawsuit does wipe out the law, Trump and Republicans can heroically step in with their own plan. Trump publicly echoed this view by saying, “The Republican Party will soon become known as the party of health care.”

In other words, this partywide disaster occurred because Trump believed his voters would see him as acting decisively if he embraced the lawsuit to blow up Obamacare (never mind the people it’s helping in Trump country), and because his cluelessness about health care persuaded him Republicans could effortlessly conjure up an alternative. The irony is this affair reveals his total lack of control over events.

## A disaster on immigration

On immigration, Trump dramatically threatened to close the border if Mexico doesn’t stop “letting” asylum seekers reach our southern border. But after being persuaded that border closure would unleash great economic damage, Trump backed down.

Trump is now serving up still more threats:

Donald J. Trump ✔ @realDonaldTrump ....However, if for any reason Mexico stops apprehending and bringing the illegals back to where they came from, the U.S. will be forced to Tariff at 25% all cars made in Mexico and shipped over the Border to us. If that doesn’t work, which it will, I will close the Border.......

6:11 AM - Apr 5, 2019

Donald J. Trump ✔ @realDonaldTrump ....This will supersede USMCA. Likewise I am looking at an economic penalty for the 500 Billion Dollars in illegal DRUGS that are shipped and smuggled through Mexico and across our Southern Border. Over 100,00 Americans die each year, sooo many families destroyed!

Trump will probably get around to this after compelling Mexico to pay for his wall.

## The gap between Trump’s view of his base and reality

The serious point here is that all this is happening for the same reason the health care mess happened: There’s an enormous gap between what Trump thinks his base wants — toughness and threats, or really action of any kind — and policy reality.

In a rage over the spike in the number of families seeking asylum, Trump has to do something. But closing ports of entry wouldn’t do anything about the problem, because asylum seekers could still set foot on U.S. soil and then exercise their legal right to apply.

As for the idea that this will compel Mexico to do more, that’s also absurd. As Dara Lind explains, Trump is setting an impossibly high bar for Mexico to clear, again, because he lacks a basic understanding of the complexities at play, rendering the “threat” largely meaningless even if it were operative. One thing Trump is following through on — rescinding aid to Northern Triangle countries to force them to act somehow — risks making the problem worse.

## ‘But his base loves this’

At this point, someone will say, “But his base loves this,” or that “All this chaos helps Trump.” Perhaps. I think these are just more manifestations of the idea that Trump has magical political powers. His base isn’t enough to win in 2020; his party got slaughtered over immigration in 2018, once the electorate got a look at his actual policies; and, if anything, when it comes to the border, Trump increasingly represents not law and order, but cruelty and incompetence.

Similarly, on the special counsel investigation, someone will say, “But Trump is getting away with all of it.” In a sense, perhaps. But Trump was never going to get indicted for anything, and it’s becoming obvious that a lot of the special counsel’s findings are going to come out — and will likely be politically very damaging. A tremendous amount of damaging material has already been established. We have no idea where all this will end up, and every time we’re told Trump pulled a rabbit out of his hat, new events come along and skin the rabbit alive.

**Trump is floundering around disastrously on multiple fronts. We need to see what’s right at the end of our noses.**

Greg Sargent writes The Plum Line blog. He joined The Post in 2010, after stints at Talking Points Memo, New York Magazine and the New York Observer.

# The Mueller Report Won’t End Trump’s Presidency, But It Sure Makes Him Look Bad

By Susan B. GlasserApril 18, 2019

In the most memorable scene in the most anticipated government report in recent history, the special counsel, Robert Mueller, takes us inside the Oval Office on May 17, 2017. President Trump, having fired the F.B.I. director in an apparent effort to shut down the investigation of him and his 2016 campaign, was in the middle of interviewing candidates for the new vacancy. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who had recused himself from overseeing the Russia investigation, much to the President’s fury, stepped out of the room to take a phone call. He returned with bad news: his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, had appointed Mueller to be a special counsel and conduct an independent investigation. Russiagate would live on. Trump “slumped” over in his chair, according to the report. “Oh, my God, this is the end of my Presidency,” he said. “**I’m fucked.**”

For now, at least, it appears that he was wrong. The appointment of Mueller did not lead to the end of Trump’s Presidency. Not yet, and probably not ever. **The release of the special counsel’s report, on Thursday, showed that Mueller did not turn up conclusive evidence of a conspiracy between the Trump campaign and the Russians who interfered in the 2016 election to boost Trump’s candidacy**. But the report’s belated publication, almost four weeks to the day after Mueller submitted it to Attorney General William Barr, **is hardly the “complete and total exoneration” that Trump initially claimed it was and that Barr misleadingly and incompletely portrayed to the country**. We knew that wasn’t the case the minute Trump said it.

What we didn’t know until Thursday, when we finally saw the four-hundred-and-forty-eight-page document, **is how much evidence Mueller had amassed about the President, panicked and in crisis mode, trying to shut down and block the investigation.** The report documents **ten different incidents that raise questions about the President’s behavior.** Was it obstruction of justice? The Mueller report concluded (albeit in legalistic and unclear language) that that is a matter for Congress to decide. And Congress, as a matter of political calculation and senatorial math, remains unlikely to pursue the question to its bitter end.

“This is the end of my Presidency” seems as though it will go down as one of Trump’s most memorable quotes. The famously self-pitying President went on to complain, according to the report, “This is the worst thing that ever happened to me.” Hope Hicks, Trump’s spokeswoman at the time, saw him soon after. She testified to the special counsel that she had seen Trump that upset only once before: on October 7, 2016, when the “Access Hollywood” tape came out. The parallel is instructive. Even people in Trump’s inner circle believed the “Access Hollywood” tape, in which Trump is heard bragging about forcing himself on women, would spell the end of his White House hopes. Reince Priebus, who would go on to become Trump’s first White House chief of staff, told him that the race was over. But, of course, that is not how the story ended. Trump won on Election Day, though it was a messy victory and will always have an asterisk next to it: Trump is one of only a few Presidents in American history to win the Presidency via the Electoral College while losing the popular vote. The Mueller report appears to have arrived at a similar outcome. Trump has won in the sense that his Presidency is almost certainly not going to end because of the investigation. **But there will always be an asterisk next to this, too: Was there obstruction or wasn’t there?** What should we make of all the **dozens and dozens of contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian representatives during 2016?** There was evidence, but it did not “establish” that a crime took place, the special counsel has told us. So what did take place? In the absence of some definitive new investigation, the asterisk will remain.

So, too, will the portrait of the White House that Mueller and his team have produced, which is surely one of the most damning insider accounts ever written about a Presidency in modern times. What the report portrays, in numbing legalese and revealing footnotes, is a **breathtaking culture of lying and impunity, distrust and double-dealing.** Trump is its architect, its chief practitioner, and its greatest beneficiary. Of course, much has been said and written in the past two and a half years about the toxic nature of the Trump White House, about its epic levels of staff turnover and its vicious climate of suspicion and backstabbing. All that and more seem to be true, according to the account that emerges from the Mueller report, and there is a value to having this recorded for posterity. It is not just another best-selling book based on anonymous sources; it is based on sworn testimony and on contemporaneous notes, e-mails, and phone records that only a prosecutor could have had access to.

Many commentators were surprised and outraged that Attorney General Barr held on to the report for as long as he did. Soon after he received it, he released a four-page summary, which now seems more than a little discordant with the tone and substance of Mueller’s actual findings. On Thursday morning, he held a twenty-two-minute press conference at the Justice Department to weigh in, once again, with his own views of how exculpatory the report is for President Trump—all before letting anyone actually read it. In his press conference, Barr made a number of dubious and highly questionable claims, such as an assertion that the White House had fully coöperated with Mueller’s investigation and that Mueller had found “no evidence” of the Trump campaign conspiring with Russia. In fact, **the report details the many ways in which Trump was not only refusing to coöperate with the investigation but was doing his best to shut it down. For instance, he tried to get the White House counsel to fire Mueller and repeatedly lied about doing it.** The Mueller report also notes that the lack of a conclusion about whether there was a conspiracy between Trump and Russia “does not mean there was no evidence.” But, having now read the report, I am not surprised by how the Attorney General chose to characterize it; William Barr, it turns out, is a perfect representative of the Trump Administration.

We pretty much knew this was coming. On Wednesday evening, President Trump himself announced that Barr would give a press conference the next morning. Then came news from the Justice Department that Congress and the public would get the report only after the press conference. Then came a Times report that the Justice Department had, in fact, briefed White House lawyers about the Mueller findings before the release, aiding their preparations to rebut it. To say that Washington heads were exploding would be an understatement. Imagine Richard Nixon announcing that Leon Jaworski would be giving a press conference the next day to exonerate him, and you get some sense of how this late-breaking information was received. By 8 p.m., Representative Jerry Nadler, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Democratic-controlled House, was telling reporters that the “Attorney General appears to be waging a media campaign on behalf of President Trump, the very subject of the investigation at the heart of the Mueller report.” The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, tweeted, “AG Barr has thrown out his credibility and the DOJ’s independence with his single-minded effort to protect @realdonaldtrump above all else.” And all this was before a single redacted page had hit the Internet.

Was the Trump Administration really risking such outrage over a report that offered the President “complete and total exoneration,” as the White House claimed it did? Why would Attorney General Barr handle the process of releasing the report in such a controversial way if his goal was to insure that it had as much credibility as possible in these divided, partisan times?

The answer was clear within the first few minutes of Barr’s press conference. In the course of the press conference, the Attorney General referenced “no collusion” or what he said was the report’s finding that there had been no conspiracy between Trump and Russia no fewer than nine times. **Obstruction was barely mentioned**, except in a largely unexplained comment that he did not fully agree with Mueller’s legal reasoning. The Attorney General acknowledged that he had allowed the White House counsel and Trump’s personal lawyers to read the report while keeping its contents secret from the public and Congress, but he never explained why he had submitted his own letter to Congress last month in place of the written summaries of the report that Mueller’s team had prepared in expectation of their release. Barr sounded like Trump’s lawyer, not his Attorney General. Chris Wallace, the chief political anchor on Fox News, said, on air, “He seemed almost to be acting the counsel for the defense.” Within minutes, Trump was tweeting victory. “Game over,” he wrote. “I’m having a good day,” he said in a brief public appearance a few minutes after that. “It’s called no collusion, no obstruction.”

Then the report hit. We all started reading.

It should be said that reading the Mueller report is a tough slog, especially for an American without a party. It is hard to read partly because it **shows the President ordering his subordinates to lie and to carry out dubious and unethical acts.** In many cases, they did what he said. In some cases, they did not, and that, in its own way, is just as disturbing. There it is in black and white: a thorough and careful legal document **showing high-ranking officials of the U.S. government refusing to obey orders from the President because they believed them to be improper or outright illegal.** Perhaps the most revealing piece of the obstruction evidence from the report is that Trump called the White House counsel, Don McGahn, on a weekend in June, 2017, to order him to fire Mueller; McGahn refused to do so and prepared to quit instead, determined to avoid a Watergate-style Saturday Night Massacre. In defying Trump, McGahn may well have saved him. If the Mueller investigation does not turn out to be “the end of my Presidency,” as Trump predicted, it will not be because of the President but in spite of him.

The report found that the President of the United States was less credible than the F.B.I. director he fired, when their accounts of their interactions conflicted. It found that he was less credible than his own White House counsel, when their accounts conflicted. When reports first surfaced about the now infamous Trump Tower meeting in June, 2016, Trump was not only involved in trying to cover up what happened; he directed the coverup.

The President himself comes across as a mobster, often lamenting that his lawyers are not as good at representing him as was his early mentor Roy Cohn, an actual mob lawyer. It comes as no surprise that Trump lies about so many things, big and small, though it is still remarkable that he does so even in the midst of a high-stakes legal investigation. Concerning a dinner with the soon-to-be-fired F.B.I. director, James Comey, at which Trump asked for “loyalty,” the report said, Trump later lied even about the fact that he had invited Comey to dinner, claiming falsely, in public, that he thought the F.B.I. director had requested the meeting. The report goes to great lengths to disprove this one small example, among many, of Trump’s falsehoods, presenting evidence that includes “The President’s Daily Diary,” which records that Trump “extend[ed] a dinner invitation" to Comey on January 27,” and sworn testimony from Priebus.

Everyone in the White House, it seems, was writing down memos for the files. Trump was forcing his subordinates into awkward conversations that made them run for their lawyers. A phone call to the director of the National Security Agency, in which Trump complained about Comey and the investigation, was so bizarre that the N.S.A. chief immediately wrote a record of the conversation and put it in a safe. Trump lied to his staff. He yelled at them. He hid things from them. He not only lied to the press but actively enlisted others to do so, too. When he was secretly preparing to fire Comey, he confided the fact to Stephen Miller, the young loyalist who is supposed to be advising him on immigration policy, and ordered him not to tell the rest of the White House staff. (Even Miller apparently thought this was sneaky and wrong; he called Priebus that night to give him a heads-up that Trump was about to do something big with the “Comey situation.”) The lying was so endemic that even when Sarah Sanders was caught cold by the special counsel’s office, she blithely dismissed her blatant falsehoods. She told the special counsel that it was a mere “slip of the tongue” to claim, based on no evidence, that “countless members of the F.B.I.” wanted Jim Comey fired because the F.B.I. director had lost the confidence of the agency. This, Sanders said, was merely rhetoric, spoken “in the heat of the moment.” Remember all those times that Sanders and the President’s many defenders on Capitol Hill said that he was never even considering firing Mueller? Yeah, that wasn’t true either.

After reading the report, it was hard to recall the world of utter vindication and Presidential victimization that Attorney General Barr had painted earlier in the day. But damning is not the same as definitive. The details have piled up, but it’s also fair to say that I don’t know anything more than I did Thursday morning about why Donald Trump has such a strange affection for Vladimir Putin, or what to make of the Trump campaign’s apparent advance knowledge of the hacked e-mails that Russia released into the toxic morass of the 2016 campaign.

Nor, sadly though predictably, has any of this addressed the bitter partisan divide in American politics, which now seems all but irreversible. As some journalists were sputtering in outrage on Twitter about the behavior documented in the report, Kellyanne Conway, the counsellor to the President, was on the White House driveway picking up the spinning where Barr and the President’s lawyers left off. Being cleared of charges, she said, guarantees the President’s reëlection in 2020. T**he day had turned into a predictable Rorschach test of partisan and tribal loyalties.** In Trumpworld, vindication meant his guaranteed reëlection; to the President’s critics, the report was damning, devastating, an impeachment referral, a congressional call to arms.

Instead of clarity, Washington quickly settled into second-guessing everyone about everything. Mueller was blasted by legal analysts for failing to issue subpoenas and compel testimony from Trump and Trump’s kids. Barr was blasted for his misleading press conference and public statements. Trump and his advisers were called out by seemingly every reporter whose story was ever incorrectly labelled “fake news” by the President. Democrats were second-guessing other Democrats who didn’t think they should pursue impeachment. Republicans were second-guessing those who predicted Mueller would produce evidence of a massive conspiracy and coverup. “TOLD YA!!!” Trump’s son Don, Jr., tweeted. In its cryptic triumphalism, his tweet seemed to sum up the state of the spin cycle perfectly. Everybody would claim to have been right, while insisting that everybody else was wrong.

Susan B. Glasser is a staff writer at The New Yorker, where she writes a weekly column on life in Trump’s Washington.

# A Complete Analysis Of Trump’s 124th Unpresidented Week As POTUS

Donald Trump’s smoke and mirrors presidency continued as his tactics of disinformation, misdirection, and obstruction moved forward while he was abroad.

by: Ahmed Baba on June 9, 2019

Trump’s first major typo after winning the election was spelling Unprecedented incorrectly. He infamously tweeted “Unpresidented.” This typo is emblematic of his administration: An impulsive, frantically thrown together group of characters with virtually no oversight. After Trump was sworn in, I started writing the weekly “Unpresidented” column, analyzing his every move. This is week 124.

This week, Trump played his latest reality TV role of international statesman. While his D-Day speech garnered praise, it contradicted a presidency filled with undemocratic actions and rhetoric that seeks to erode the post-WWII world order those brave men at Normandy fought to establish.

While in the UK (the United Kingdom), President Trump told the world not to believe their eyes and ears by claiming the very real protests of his arrival in Britain didn’t exist. Trump also claimed he did not call the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, “nasty,” in spite of audio proving he did. Trump also attacked Robert Mueller and Nancy Pelosi, fellow Americans, with Normandy cemetery behind him.

At home, the Trump Administration continued its unprecedented stonewalling of House Democrats. They’re trying to expand the definition of executive privilege to legitimize their obstruction, “instructing” witnesses not to comply with congressional subpoenas, and lying about the damning obstruction evidence in former Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s report.

By the end of the week, President Trump backed off his earlier threat of tariffs on Mexico (taxes on the American taxpayer) if they didn’t stop migrant flow. Trump claimed there was a breakthrough deal with Mexico, but it was later reported that the agreement consisted largely of previously agreed upon measures.

So what really happened is Trump panicked last week when Mueller’s statement was getting endless coverage. Trump then pivoted to Mexico tariff threats, then the GOP began signaling they would move to block him. It would’ve been their most consequential rebuke of him thus far. So, President Trump backed off. Another attempt to con the media and his supporters into claiming he had a win.

Let’s dive into another Unpresidented week filled with smoke and mirrors.

**Day 865: Monday, June 3**

Last week, former Special Counsel Robert Mueller sent shockwaves through the political world by publicly stating what his report already outlined: President Trump was not exonerated, the Office of Legal Counsel memos stating a President cannot be indicted prevented Mueller from considering charging Trump, and that Congress is responsible for holding President Trump accountable.

In perhaps the largest example of the fact only a small percentage of Americans have actually read the 448-page Mueller report, many pundits appeared surprised when Mueller made his statement. The coverage of the public soundbites moved even more lawmakers and presidential candidates to call for impeachment. Although Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is reluctant to impeach, House Democrats appear to be on the offensive.

Today, the House Judiciary Committee announced that they will be holding a series of hearings entitled “Lessons From the Mueller Report: Presidential Obstruction and Other Crimes,” the first of which will be held on June 10th. The hearing will feature testimony from former White House Counsel John Dean, who famously testified against former President Richard Nixon during the Watergate hearings. In his statement last week, Robert Mueller signaled he does not want to testify but House Democrats are still attempting to get him on Capitol Hill.

In a statement announcing the upcoming hearings, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) said: “No one is above the law. While the White House continues to cover up and stonewall, and to prevent the American people from knowing the truth, we will continue to move forward with our investigation…”

In another move marking an escalation in House Democrats’ approach to oversight, the full House will vote to hold Attorney General William Barr in contempt of Congress on June 11 for not complying with their subpoena for the full unredacted Mueller report. They will also vote to hold former White House Counsel Don McGahn in contempt for failing to comply with the House Judiciary Committee’s subpoena compelling his testimony.

In related news, House Oversight and Reform Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-MD) announced that they will schedule a vote to hold Attorney General William Barr and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross in contempt of Congress if they don’t turn over documents related to the 2020 census by this Thursday. Cummings said in a letter:

“The Trump administration has been engaged in one of the most unprecedented cover-ups since Watergate, extending from the White House to multiple federal agencies and departments of the government and across numerous investigations.”

As if there weren’t enough moves from House Democrats on Monday, House Antitrust Subcommittee Chairman announced a broad antitrust investigation into Silicon Valley’s largest tech companies. The probe will investigate whether companies like Facebook, Google, and Amazon are engaging in “anti-competitive conduct.”

In regards to the Trump Administration, given the fact they have stonewalled almost every congressional subpoena and have now proven they are willing to defy a court order from federal prosecutors, the pressure Democrats are applying appears more than justified. Over 1,000 former federal prosecutors have signed a letter asserting that President Trump would be indicted for obstruction of justice if it weren’t for the OLC memos.

In other news…

The New York Times: A ‘Bridge’ to China, and Her Family’s Business, in the Trump Cabinet

NBC News: Botched reunifications left migrant children waiting in vans overnight

The Washington Post: Trump urges customers to drop AT&T to punish CNN over its coverage of him

The Washington Post: Figure linked to Trump transition charged with transporting child pornography

The New York Times: U.S. Requiring Social Media Information From Visa Applicants

CNN: Judge rejects House Democrats’ attempt to block border wall

NBC News: House passes $19 billion disaster relief bill

The New York Times: Trump Administration Considered Tariffs on Australia

Bloomberg: Departing Trump Economist Sees Risk to 3% U.S. Growth Goal

AP: Pentagon tells White House to stop politicizing military

Politico: Conservatives push to reinstate Steve King on committees despite racist remarks

CNN: The 29 most eyebrow-raising lines from Jared Kushner’s Axios interview

**Day 866: Tuesday, June 4**

The modern conservative theory of the unitary executive is corrupting our system of government. It’s the theory that Article II of the Constitution renders the President an all-powerful figure. The theory can be summed up in President Richard Nixon’s infamous words: “Well, when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal.” This is a notion the Trump administration is embracing in the aftermath of President Trump’s unprecedented obstruction of the Russia probe and his tactic of stonewalling Congress.

As Attorney General William Barr indicated in his 19-page memo attacking former Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s obstruction investigation, he thoroughly believes in the unitary executive theory. In his 4-page summary of the Mueller report, in which he lied about the findings in the Mueller report and attempted to exonerate President Trump, Barr made clear that he believes a President is incapable of obstructing justice. In Barr’s Senate Judiciary hearing last month, the Attorney General said that the President has the power to curtail any investigation if he feels he is being falsely accused.

The House Judiciary Committee has voted to hold Barr in contempt of Congress for refusing to comply with a congressional subpoena and the full House is set to vote on the resolution next week. Even President George W. Bush’s former Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo, who is a proponent of the unitary executive, believes that the Trump Administration is going too far by refusing to comply with subpoenas. Barr’s undemocratic belief in absolute executive authority has been apparent throughout his career.

In 1989, then-Assistant Attorney General William Barr in the Office of Legal Counsel wrote a memo entitled “Common Legislative Encroachments On Executive Branch Authority.” In the memo, Barr embodies the unitary executive theory by claiming restrictions on the President’s “removal power,” legislative vetoes, and “attempts to gain access to sensitive Executive Branch information” are legislative encroachments. In 1992, then-Attorney General William Barr worked with President George H.W. Bush on the Iran-Contra pardons which depicted the investigation as partisan.

As you can see, the use of the unitary executive theory to justify an expansive view of presidential power is nothing new, in fact, it’s a view held in many conservative legal circles today. The problem is, this new version of the unitary executive perverts the original vision of Alexander Hamilton, who pioneered the theory. Hamilton first broached the idea of the unitary executive in the Federalist Papers. The idea was for all executive authority to lie with the President rather than delegating decision-making power throughout different deputies.

As Professor Bradley Hays wrote in The Washington Post, Hamilton actually intended the unitary executive to increase accountability by centralizing the power of the executive. Hays also notes that Hamilton explicitly states that the unitary executive does not place the President above the law:

In Federalist 65, he clearly states that a president impeached for misconduct is also “liable to prosecution and punishment in the ordinary course of law.” In other words, the presidency was not designed to be free from prosecutorial inquiry.

Modern conservative advocates of the unitary executive theory appear to leap right over Federalist 65 and have taken a Nixonian view of presidential power – one that places the president above the law entirely. President Trump has already been named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Southern District of New York’s conviction of Michael Cohen’s campaign finance felonies. Robert Mueller outlined 10 areas of obstruction of justice on the part of President Trump and left it to Congress to decide his fate because he was restricted by the OLC memos stating a sitting president cannot be indicted. Over 1,000 former federal prosecutors have signed a letter asserting that President Trump would be indicted for obstruction of justice if it weren’t for those OLC memos.

In an interview with CBS last week, Barr continued to defend his attempt to clear the President of obstruction of justice and discussed his plans to investigate the very same people President Trump has falsely accused of treason. Barr has confirmed that he is willing to do whatever it takes to uphold the power of this presidency – even if it means protecting a lawless President who violates the Constitution. Meanwhile, the Republican Party is willing to stand by both men every step of the way.

Today, House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA) calledWilliam Barr “the second-most dangerous man in the country.” Judging by what Barr believes and the authoritarian tendencies he is willing to embolden, that statement rings true.

In other news…

Rantt Media: America’s Declining Empathy Is Eroding Our Democracy

Rantt Media: Sexism In 2020: How We’re Repeating The Mistakes Of 2016

The Washington Post: White House instructs Hope Hicks, former McGahn aide not to comply with congressional subpoenas

CBS News: House passes latest DREAM Act, hoping to place millions of immigrants on path to citizenship

The New York Times: Mexico Will Face Tariffs Next Week, Trump Vows

The Washington Post: GOP lawmakers warn White House they’ll try to block Trump’s Mexico tariffs

TPM: DOJ To Nadler: We’ll Reopen Mueller Report Talks If You Undo Barr Contempt Vote

The New York Times: Paul Manafort to Be Sent to Rikers, Where He Will be Held in Isolation

NBC News: Trump admin okayed nuclear permits for Saudis after Khashoggi killing

The Hill: NBC’s Engel: Trump ‘sounded delusional’ saying ‘thousands’ welcomed him in UK

The Daily Beast: Alabama Mayor Suggests Killing LGBTQ People in Facebook Post He Says He Thought Was Private

CNN: The bond market may be signaling something worse than a recession: Distrust in America

NBC News: Hotel investor: Trump evaded taxes in Panama

AP: Trump administration halts cruises to Cuba under new rules

**Day 867-868: Wednesday-Thursday, June 5-6**

75 years ago today, Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy in the effort of liberating France from the Nazi occupation. A little after midnight, 24,000 paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines and were followed by 132,000 troops who stormed the beaches. Over 9,000 were wounded or missing and 4,414 were confirmed dead in the operation. This was the beginning of the liberation of Europe from the Nazis, and we all know how that ended.

Today, in Normandy, President Trump delivered a speech commemorating the sacrifices that were made that fateful day. The remarks received rave reviews from Trump supporters and critics alike. This happens all the time. President Trump musters the self-control not to do something stupid and he is deemed presidential. But what those who are prone to praising yet another momentary display of Trump competence seem to forget is the fact his speech didn’t happen in a vacuum.

Just minutes before the speech, with the Normandy Cemetery behind him in the frame of the Fox News interview, President Trump called decorated war veteran Robert Mueller a fool and attacked Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Not even the gravity of this historic moment could thwart President Trump’s habit of insulting his fellow Americans or attacking veterans that he personally dislikes – the late Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Adm. William McRaven being recent examples. These insults are made worse when you factor Trump’s Vietnam War draft-dodging into the equation.

This speech also comes as Trump’s presidency has undermined the very same post-WWII world order that those brave men fought to create 75 years ago. President Trump’s disdain for the US-led liberal order has been never been subtle. President Trump’s anti-NATO stance can best be demonstrated in his July 2018 trip to Brussels, where he attacked the alliance with lies and baseless accusations. While attacking the NATO alliance, Trump has repeatedly sided with despots like North Korean Dictator Kim Jong-un and Russian President Vladimir Putin over western democracies, including the US.

Anyone who knows their history is aware that the post-WWII order was crafted by the United States. NATO was founded 70 years ago to promote the shared values of democracy and uphold the common security of the West. America’s disproportionate investments in NATO yield dividends in American dominance, in spite of Trump’s assertions those investments are fruitless. Not to mention the fact NATO is an alliance that has come to America’s defense (see Article 5’s invocation after 9/11). The peaceful Europe of today is the result of decades of US leadership, which President Trump has been undermining since he took office.

There is also the fact that President Trump has refused to combat the rise of neo-Nazism in America and even referred to those among the 2017 neo-Nazi protestors in Charlottesville as “very fine people.” Trump has also embodied the very same authoritarian tendencies that those fighting in WWII sought to rid from the Earth. Thousands of allied forces didn’t die on D-Day fighting fascism for the 45th President of the United States to be a wannabe fascist who erodes the post-WWII world order and calls the ideological descendants of the Nazis “very fine people.”

In other news…

CNN Exclusive: Homeland Security watchdog finds ‘egregious’ conditions at ICE facilities in 2018

The Washington Post: Mexico aims to avoid tariffs with potential deal limiting migrants going north, allowing U.S. to deport Central American asylum seekers

The Hill: Trump plans to declare new national emergency to impose tariffs

The Hill: House Democrats officially introduce contempt resolution for Barr, McGahn

Politico: Robert Mueller could be subpoenaed in the next two weeks

Politico: Contempt vote likely after DOJ rejects demand for census docs

Buzzfeed News: Listen To The Voicemail Trump’s Lawyer Left For Michael Flynn’s Lawyer After Flynn Cut A Deal

Reuters: Trump to decide on $300 billion China tariffs after G20 meeting

CBS News: Military to spend a month painting border barriers to “improve aesthetic appearance”

Politico: Pelosi tells Dems she wants to see Trump ‘in prison’

CNN: Inside Jerry Nadler’s private push to open up impeachment inquiry

Axios: Trump’s incredibly empty Cabinet

The Daily Beast: NRA Subpoenas Oliver North, Its Ex-President

The Daily Beast: Roy Moore’s Attorney Arrested on Drug Charges

**Day 869: Friday, June 7**

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has been fighting back calls for the impeachment of President Trump for months. Many Democratic lawmakers, Republican Rep. Justin Amash, and presidential candidates have been pushing for the launch of an impeachment inquiry since Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s redacted report was released. Those calls have risen in intensity since Mueller’s public statement, which further highlighted the fact Mueller expected Congress to hold Trump accountable for obstruction. Pelosi’s latest attempt to push back on impeachment has raised eyebrows and the hypocritical ire of President Trump.

This week, reports alleged that when House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) pushed Pelosi to let him move to open an impeachment inquiry, Pelosi told him that she’d rather see Trump in prison than be impeached. Pelosi has pushed this idea before that if the Senate exonerates President Trump, then he somehow can’t be prosecuted once he leaves office. That isn’t how double jeopardy works. Either way, these statements about imprisoning Trump were objectively problematic.

No politician, not the President or the Speaker of the House, should be talking about who should be imprisoned and who should not. It’d be best for Pelosi to focus on holding Trump accountable using her constitutional means while Trump is in office and then let the justice system do its own thing once he leaves office. President Trump jumped on the comments without a hint of self-awareness.

In an interview on Fox News right before his speech at Normandy on Thursday, President Trump attacked Pelosi for making those comments. Today, President Trump took to Twitter to express his dismay.

Donald J. Trump ✔@realDonaldTrump · Jun 7, 2019 Nervous Nancy Pelosi is a disgrace to herself and her family for having made such a disgusting statement, especially since I was with foreign leaders overseas. There is no evidence for such a thing to have been said. Nervous Nancy & Dems are getting Zero work done in Congress....

Donald J. Trump✔@realDonaldTrump ...and have no intention of doing anything other than going on a fishing expedition to see if they can find anything on me - both illegal & unprecedented in U.S. history. There was no Collusion - Investigate the Investigators! Go to work on Drug Price Reductions & Infrastructure!

9:57 AM - Jun 7, 2019

Fox News Anchor Sean Hannity also expressed some faux outrage over the comments as well.

Ahmed Baba @AhmedBaba\_ Trump (who is now implicated in two campaign finance felonies in the SDNY and likely obstructed justice) and members of his campaign (like Michael Flynn who have literally pleaded guilty to felonies) called for Clinton to be jailed with absolutely no evidence of crimes

Aaron Rupar ✔@atrupar Here's Sean Hannity saying last night, without a shred of self-awareness, that it's "beyond despicable" for Pelosi to say "she would like to see Trump behind bars."

"Based on no actual crime she wants a political opponents locked up?" he said. "That happens in banana republics."

6:13 AM - Jun 7, 2019

Donald Trump falsely accused his perceived political opponents of treason just last week and spent his entire Campaign calling for Hillary Clinton to be locked up with no evidence of crimes.

Rantt Media@RanttMedia @nytimes: Bannon, Ivanka, Kushner, Miller, Cohn, & Priebus all used private emails

2016 Trump on Clinton emails: "She should be in jail"

Although Pelosi’s comments were inappropriate, it’s entirely inaccurate to make a direct comparison to Trump’s calls for Clinton to be jailed. The FBI found no crimes on the part of Clinton with her use of a private email server. Republican congressional probes found no wrongdoing on her part in Benghazi. The Clinton Foundation is still up and running—the Trump Foundation was shut down due to criminal activity. Also important to note that Trump has actually already ordered an investigation into his perceived enemies and has embraced his worst authoritarian tendencies.

President Trump, on the other hand, had been implicated in two campaign finance felonies which his personal fixer Michael Cohen has pleaded guilty and was convicted for. Over 1,000 former federal prosecutors have signed a letter asserting that President Trump would be indicted for the obstruction evidence outlined in the Mueller report if it weren’t for the OLC memos stating sitting president cannot be indicted. Needless to say, Trump may very well be in legal trouble when he leaves office. But that is better left to the federal prosecutors. For now, many Trump critics believe an impeachment inquiry that highlights Trump’s corruption would be a good start.

In other news…

The New York Times: Trump Says U.S. Has Reached Deal With Mexico and Calls Off Tariffs

The New York Times: Mexico Agreed to Take Border Actions Months Before Trump Announced Tariff Deal

The New York Times: Automakers Tell Trump His Pollution Rules Could Mean ‘Untenable’ Instability and Lower Profits

NBC News: Trump admin tells U.S. embassies no rainbow pride flag on flagpoles

Politico: White House tried to block Kris Kobach from testifying about census

CNN: US and Russian warships nearly collide in the Pacific

CNN: Trump flips on space goals: ‘NASA should NOT be talking about going to the Moon’ and focus on Mars

CNN: Judge orders FBI to reveal more parts of Comey memos

Ahmed Baba is Co-Founder and COO/Editor-in-Chief of Rantt Media. Writer of Unpresidented, Ahmed documents and analyzes every day of the Trump presidency. He publishes op-eds in The Independent and his work has been cited in The New York Times, The Washington Post, BBC, The Huffington Post, Yahoo News, Blavity, Newsweek, The Telegraph, and more.

# Trump Stifled Efforts To Combat White Supremacy While Fueling It

August 9, 2019

Rantt Media

In the face of insurmountable evidence depicting the white supremacist terrorist threat, President Trump has actively weakened government efforts to combat it.

President Donald Trump listens to reporters questions about the Charlottesville neo-Nazi rally. This was the day he called them "very fine people." - Tuesday, Aug. 15, 2017 in New York. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

Rantt Rundown, **Day 930 of Trump’s presidency** – Today’s top stories:

In July, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the Senate Judiciary Committee: ”I will say that a majority of the domestic terrorism cases that we’ve investigated are motivated by some version of what you might call white supremacist violence, but it does include other things as well." One would think the President who constantly fear mongers about the false national security threat of migrants and once raved about ISIS would take this new terrorist threat seriously, right? Wrong.

At Rantt Media, we've spent the last 2 and a half years highlighting President Trump's racist rhetoric. We've also discussed the ways in which Trump has spouted white supremacist rhetoric and stifled programs meant to address the threat. Today, **CNN broke some news that further showcased the extent to which the Trump Administration has gone to prevent white supremacist terrorism from being combatted.** CNN reported:

White House officials rebuffed efforts by their colleagues at the Department of Homeland Security for more than a year to make combating domestic terror threats, such as those from white supremacists, a greater priority as specifically spelled out in the National Counterterrorism Strategy, current and former senior administration officials as well as other sources close to the Trump administration tell CNN.

"Homeland Security officials battled the White House for more than a year to get them to focus more on domestic terrorism," one senior source close to the Trump administration tells CNN. "The White House wanted to focus only on the jihadist threat which, while serious, ignored the reality that racial supremacist violence was rising fast here at home. They had major ideological blinders on."

CNN quoted a current senior Trump official who said, "DHS is surging resources to the [domestic terrorism] issue, but they're behind the curve because of **lack of support from the White House.**" The National Counterterrorism Strategy, released by the U.S. in October 2018, named "Radical Islamist terrorists" as the main threats to America. The report only had one paragraph about "other forms of extremism" and didn't even name white supremacy by name. Instead, it said "racially motivated extremism." The Trump administration was warned of the threat of white supremacist terrorism by the FBI and DHS but still failed to prioritize it.

This news comes just days after a white supremacist terrorist murdered 22 and injured 24 people in El Paso, Texas. The terrorist proclaimed in his anti-immigrant manifesto that he was targeting Latinos because of the "Hispanic invasion of Texas". Aside from echoing President Trump's migrant fear-mongering, the terrorist cited the Christchurch white supremacist terrorist's manifesto, which called Trump “a symbol of renewed white identity”.

Mark Potok, an expert on the radical right, outlined the rise of white supremacist terrorism.

Another study, by the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute, found that the American far right was behind nearly twice as many domestic terror plots as Islamist groups from 2008 to 2016 — 115 cases versus 63 from radical Islamists. The Anti-Defamation League reports that 71 percent of killings by extremists in the United States between 2008 and 2017 were carried out by radical rightists. And the numbers of both hate groups and hate crimes have recently been rising.

In spite of the growing threat, President Trump had a "very bad people on both sides" moment today, falsely equating white supremacist terrorists and Antifa.

President Trump: ”I am concerned about the rise of any group of hate … whether it's white supremacy, whether it's any other kind of supremacy, whether it's Antifa, whether it's any group of hate I'm very concerned about it and I'll do something about it” pic.twitter.com/egEq0yYASq

— CNN Politics (@CNNPolitics) August 7, 2019

As I've written before, what we’re seeing here is an internationally cooperative terrorist movement of white supremacists built via online radicalization – a movement the President of the United States openly stokes while curtailing the mechanisms combating it. With today's CNN report, it further proves that in the face of insurmountable evidence of the growing white supremacist threat, President Trump has weakened the government's ability to address it. And it goes far beyond what was reported today.

On June 23, 2017, the Trump administration cut funding ($400,000) from the “Countering Violent Extremism” program which backed an anti-white supremacist organization founded by former neo-Nazis. And according to The Daily Beast, the DHS disbanded their Domestic Terror Unit last year:

"The Department of Homeland Security has disbanded a group of intelligence analysts who focused on domestic terrorism, The Daily Beast has learned. Numerous current and former DHS officials say they find the development concerning, as the threat of homegrown terrorism—including white supremacist terrorism—is growing."

Business Insider further highlighted the cuts:

For instance, while the DHS office handling domestic terrorism "managed $10 million in grant funding, 16 full-time employees, 25 contractors, and a total budget of approximately $21 million," two years ago, today, resources within the office comprise of "no contractors, and no other means of supporting existing programs beyond a team of eight dedicated, full-time employees and an operating budget of $2.6 million."

This is why President Trump's speech this week condemning white supremacy and claiming his administration would take on domestic terrorism rang hollow. We mush ask ourselves, why is President Trump hell-bent on downplaying the threat of white supremacy? **The simple answer is that he holds these views himself.**

In other news...

The Washington Post: Trump attacks local leaders as he visits two cities grieving from mass shootings

NBC News: House panel sues to force testimony from former Trump White House counsel

NBC News: ICE raids sweep up 680 undocumented immigrants across Mississippi

Politico: Poll: Most Republicans support assault weapons ban, despite Trump saying 'no appetite'

Southern Poverty Law Center: U.S. State Department Official Involved in White Nationalist Movement, Hatewatch Determines

Politico: White House drafting executive order to tackle Silicon Valley’s alleged anti-conservative bias

NBC News: Religious activist convicted for burning LGBTQ library books

Newsweek: #FireTuckerCarlson trends after Fox News host calls concerns about white supremacy a "hoax"

HuffPost: After HuffPost Investigation, 4 White Nationalists Out Of U.S. Military As Others Remain

Gizmodo: How Climate Change Is Becoming a Deadly Part of White Nationalism

# Trump’s Wacky, Angry, and Extreme August



**By**[**Susan B. Glasser**](https://www.newyorker.com/contributors/susan-b-glasser)

September 2, 2019

The New Yorker



*The thirty-one days of August, 2019, offer an extraordinary catalogue of President Trump’s public meltdown.*

Photograph by Cheriss May / NurPhoto / Getty

[President Trump](https://www.newyorker.com/tag/donald-trump) ended August as he began it, with a blast of **angry tweets, ad-hominem insults, and bizarre fulminations** that have become so standard that they no longer receive the attention they deserve—emanating, as they do, from the world’s most powerful leader. In between retweeting hurricane-preparation warnings, **Trump spent the final day of the month attacking the “Disgusting and foul mouthed Omarosa” Manigault, his former adviser, who wrote a tell-all book about her short time in the Administration; the “Crooked Cop” James Comey, the former F.B.I. director, whom he fired; and the “even dumber” former C.I.A. director John Brennan. He bragged about low Labor Day gas prices, although they were actually lower on the Labor Day before he became President. He congratulated his friend Sean Hannity for the ratings on his Fox News “shoe.” A day earlier, he had tweeted what appeared to be a classified image from his intelligence briefing of “a catastrophic accident” at an Iranian missile-launch site, a Presidential leak of secret information on social media that would have been, needless to say, unthinkable in another Presidency.**

All of this took place when Trump was supposed to be in Poland, for a sombre commemoration of the beginning of the Second World War. He cancelled the trip, however, citing the need to monitor the progress of Hurricane Dorian, which was threatening Florida. Instead, **he watched Fox News; tweeted nearly two dozen times before noon on Saturday, August 31st; and then motorcaded to a Trump-branded golf course for his two hundred and twenty-sixth day on the links at one of his own properties since becoming President**. (That statistic came from Kyle Griffin, an MSNBC producer who keeps track of this particular niche Trump metric.) The Poland trip wasn’t even the first foreign visit that Trump cancelled last month. He was supposed to have gone to Denmark earlier in August, but he refused, in a fit of pique, after the Danish government mocked his efforts to buy Greenland—which was, of course, another Oval Office antic that, had it occurred a few years ago, no one would have believed.

Trump not only makes us believe it now but, as we approach the three-year mark of his upset victory, in 2016, his project has succeeded in such a confounding way that it seems as though Americans will now believe anything—and nothing at all. Today there are few things too extreme not to have plausibly come out of the mouth, or the Twitter feed, of the forty-fifth President. **In August, Trump called himself the “Chosen One” for the confrontation with China, grinned and flashed a thumbs-up during a photo op with the family of mass-shooting victims, accused Jews who voted for Democrats of “great disloyalty,” and called the chairman of the Federal Reserve an “enemy” of the United States. He cheered the robbery of a Democratic congressman’s home and labelled various critics “nasty and wrong,” “pathetic,” “highly unstable,” “wacko,” “psycho,” and “lunatic,” among other insults**. The daily stream of invective from Trump was dizzying to keep track of, and so voluminous as to almost insure that no one could, in fact, do so.

The Trumpian extremes on display in the third August of his Presidency revived a debate about whether he is descending into even less Presidential behavior, shedding the remaining constraints imposed upon him by his office and the efforts of his ever-changing staff. If it seems as if Trump is wackier, angrier, more willing to lash out, and more desperately seeking attention, that is because he is. This, at least, is my conclusion after reviewing his Twitter feed from the past month, along with his public statements, remarks to the press, speeches, and rallies. To revisit a month in the life of this President was exhausting, a dark journey to a nasty and contentious place. And, while Trump’s performance raised many questions that we can’t answer about just what is going on in his head, it was also revelatory: the thirty-one days of August, 2019, turn out to be an extraordinary catalogue of Trump’s in-our-faces meltdown.

At first I wasn’t sure that anything about Trump’s frenetic August was really different. There had been many previous months of dysfunction. He has always courted controversy and trafficked in insults. But then I looked at August, 2017, during the first summer of his Presidency, which was one of the more shocking months of his early tenure. Back then, Trump warned of “fire and fury” against North Korea and spoke of good people on both sides of the white-supremacist march in Charlottesville that culminated in the killing of a peaceful counter-protester. And yet the Trump of two years ago was different—to a degree. He was provocative and insulting and fact-challenged, of course, but to a much lesser extent than he is today. Then and now, he was boastful and braggadocious. He picked fights. But there was much less of that behavior over all—the Trump Twitter archive records two hundred and eighty-seven Trump tweets and retweets in August, 2017, compared to six hundred and eighty in August, 2019—and the volume seems to have been turned up along with the frequency. Today’s Trump is not just more prone to misspeaking and stumbling, he is also more overtly confrontational more of the time, more immersed in a daily cycle of Presidential punditry, and more casually incendiary with his words and sentiments.

Is he finding it harder to break through? Does he simply have fewer meetings on his schedule and more free time? Maybe it is all of the above. Trump has such little confidence in his third and current chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, that he’s still not removed Mulvaney’s title of “acting” White House boss, more than eight months into his tenure. It’s also true that the outrage cycle that his Presidency has become requires more fuel than it did two years ago, when the wacky pronouncements and shrill insults emanating directly from the Oval Office were still seen as a shocking novelty. Sure enough, the anger and abuse have dramatically and notably increased. Two years ago, Trump used his feed to criticize, belittle, or humiliate specific targets fourteen times in the month of August. (Interestingly, many were Republican senators who were still offering him resistance, including “publicity-seeking Lindsey Graham,” who is now one of his most faithful public promoters; and the Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, whom Trump disparaged as a “loser.”) In August of this year, the number shot up: **the President made or shared fifty-two direct insults on his Twitter feed, by my count. Many were aimed at individual members of the media—from “Crazy Lawrence O’Donnell,” of MSNBC, to “Lunatic” Chris Cuomo, of CNN, to “Psycho” Mika Brzezinski, of MSNBC, and “pathetic” Juan Williams, of Fox. Other targets who were singled out included “the Three Stooges running against me in the G.O.P. primary”; Denmark; *nato*; the euro; “car company executives”; “Sleepy Joe Biden” (August 10th: “Does anybody really believe he is mentally fit to be President?”); Beto O’Rourke; liberal Hollywood, “the true racists”; the “anti-Semite” Representative Rashida Tlaib; the “nut job” Anthony Scaramucci, the former Trump White House communications director who finally broke with his former boss last month; and, in a retweet to start off the month, “the nipple-height mayor of Londonistan**.”

Another frequent target was the Federal Reserve and its Trump-appointed chairman, Jerome Powell. For months, Trump has been crusading against Powell in what appears to be an unprecedented public-pressure campaign to turn the Fed into an arm of the President’s reëlection campaign. In August, Trump’s focus on the Fed dramatically escalated, as fears mounted about a slowing economy and the intensifying trade war with China. I counted thirty separate tweets by Trump in August criticizing Powell or the Fed, in which the President variously referred to “clueless Jay Powell,” complained about Powell’s “horrendous lack of vision,” and, most strikingly, on August 23rd, blamed the Fed for China’s alleged currency manipulation. On that day, Trump tweeted, “My only question is who is our bigger enemy, Jay Powell or Chairman Xi?”

Of course, Trump’s biggest enemy and most frequent target, two years ago and today, remains what he called the “Corrupt and Fake News,” at 5:46 *p.m.* on August 27th, and the “Fake & Corrupt News,” three minutes later. All told, #\*CROOKEDJOURNALISM\*, as he called it on August 18th, was the subject of twenty-six complaining tweets in August, 2017—and **eighty this August**. This escalation seems to be by design, rather than the result of indiscipline or passing fits of anger, at least in the sense that, as Trump himself said in a tweet last month, he hopes his criticism of the media will be one of the lasting accomplishments of his tenure. “When the ‘Age of Trump’ is looked back on many years from now, I only hope that a big part of my legacy will be the exposing of massive dishonesty in the Fake News!” There is little doubt that Trump has also decided to explicitly attack the media as part of his reëlection campaign, a plan that he broadcast in an August 10th tweet, writing, “Never has the press been more inaccurate, unfair or corrupt! We are not fighting the Democrats, they are easy, we are fighting the seriously dishonest and unhinged Lamestream Media. They have gone totally CRAZY.”

At the G-7 summit, in Biarritz, France, Trump even claimed that other world leaders were commiserating with him about negative coverage by the American press. “The question I was asked most today by fellow World Leaders, who think the USA is doing so well and is stronger than ever before, happens to be, ‘Mr. President, why does the American media hate your Country so much? Why are they rooting for it to fail?’ ” None of those leaders stepped forward to validate Trump’s claim, although many were subject to another, perhaps surprising, aspect of his Twitter feed: the increasing tendency to use it as a vehicle not only for threats and critiques but also for blandishments and over-the-top praise. This, too, seems more purposeful, or at least more self-consciously executed, than many of Trump’s critics would allow. On Saturday, during his end-of-month social-media spree, he methodically ticked off a list of tweets and retweets individually praising most of the members of the Senate Republican Conference (including targets of his ire two Augusts ago, such as McConnell and Graham).

Like his insults, Trump’s praise has become more flamboyant, and the list of those whom he Twitter-flattered this August included populist nationalists, such as India’s Narendra Modi and Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro; the “great leader” and “good man” Xi Jinping, of China; and the shambolic and duplicitous new pro-Brexit British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. The naïveté of his praise is sometimes as alarming as the vitriol of his hatred. On August 15th, with fears rising of a Chinese crackdown on protesters in Hong Kong, Trump tweeted, “If President Xi would meet directly and personally with the protesters, there would be a happy and enlightened ending to the Hong Kong problem. I have no doubt!” On August 10th, he revealed a letter from Kim Jong Un in which the North Korean dictator “very nicely” asked for a meeting while offering a “small apology” for his latest missile tests and claimed that the tests would end when U.S.-South Korean military exercises did (they did not).

# Trump fires national security advisor John Bolton

# 



John Bolton talks to reporters outside the White House on May 1.

(Evan Vucci/Associated Press)

By [ELI STOKOLS](https://www.latimes.com/la-bio-eli-stokols-staff.html),

[CHRIS MEGERIAN](https://www.latimes.com/staff/chris-megerian), TRACY WILKINSON

SEP. 10, 2019

LOS aNGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON —

President Trump said Tuesday that he had fired national security advisor John Bolton, announcing in a tweet that he’d told him Monday night that “his services are no longer needed” **after the two had repeatedly clashed over foreign policy priorities and decisions.**

The abrupt ouster of Trump’s third national security advisor comes as the White House grapples with a series of fraught challenges, including **Trump’s cancellation of peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan, his trade war with China, his “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, and his yet-unsuccessful attempts to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal.**

While Trump said he would name a new national security advisor next week, the latest high-level shake-up at the White House raised fresh doubts about Trump’s stewardship of foreign policy -- and control of his own staff -- as he heads into his reelection campaign.

As often happens under Trump, there was immediate confusion as to the sequence of events, and under what circumstances, with Trump and Bolton offering conflicting accounts of whether Bolton had resigned or been fired.

Trump tweeted around noon Monday that he had informed Bolton of his decision “last night,” adding, “**I disagreed strongly with many of his suggestions, as did others in the Administration**.”

“I asked John for his resignation, which was given to me this morning. I thank John very much for his service,” he said.

But Bolton contradicted that sequence of events, throwing into question whether the two men had a face-to-face discussion about the firing, something Trump has avoided in making other major personnel changes.

“I offered to resign last night and President Trump said, ‘Let’s talk about it tomorrow,’” Bolton tweeted about 10 minutes after Trump’s announcement.

As is typical under Trump, the firing unfolded on Twitter and Fox News in dramatic fashion. Bolton, from the White House, texted Fox News host Brian Kilmeade while he was on the air.

“John Bolton just texted me, just now, he’s watching,” Kilmeade said on the air. “He said, ‘Let’s be clear, I resigned.’”

Less than an hour earlier, the White House had notified reporters that Bolton would appear at a 1:30 p.m. briefing with two Cabinet officials.

Trump’s announcement came as a shock, even though Bolton’s increasing isolation from Trump and lack of influence on foreign policy matters were no secret within the White House.

Bolton, a prominent hawk whom the president liked from his many appearances on Fox News, was appointed in April 2018 and lasted almost a year and a half in the job, **advocating aggressive stances toward Iran, North Korea and Afghanistan**.

Bolton also took the lead on **Venezuela,** assuring Trump that its socialist President Nicolas Maduro could be easily ousted from office. At one press briefing, Bolton stood with a notepad visible to the cameras on which he’d scrawled a line about “5,000 troops to Venezuela” that appeared to be a threat of a U.S. incursion.

Trump invested political capital in the project, welcoming Venezuelan opposition figures into the Oval Office and declaring recognition of opposition leader Juan Guaido as the legitimate president of the beleaguered once-oil-rich country. But nine months later, Maduro has not budged, the opposition is flailing and the entire mission has stalled.

Although Trump appreciated Bolton’s tough talk, the two often clashed when formulating policy. Trump ran for president on a platform of reducing involvement in foreign conflicts, and he viewed Bolton as too eager to advocate military force.

When Trump made his dramatic crossing into the Korean demilitarized zone in June, grasping hands with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, Bolton had been dispatched to Mongolia. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, the president’s daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner were present, but the national security advisor was more than a thousand miles away.

Tensions between Bolton and other top members of Trump’s national security team, including Pompeo, have worsened, as Bolton pushed back on several of the president’s initiatives.

After Trump canceled his proposed meeting last weekend at Camp David with members of the Taliban and the Afghan government, stories quickly emerged that Bolton had strongly opposed the summit and the proposed peace deal with the Taliban.

# [Every high-profile Trump administration departure](https://www.axios.com/white-house-departures-6d81023a-3772-4c3e-ba70-59dfb1d9beb4.html)

# AXIOS

October 10, 2010

The Trump administration had [more first-year departures](https://www.axios.com/trump-has-set-a-new-record-for-most-white-house-departures-1515110882-4b4999a7-132a-4574-8980-ee3fa74dd705.html) than any other president in at [least 40 years](https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-is-trumps-staff-turnover-higher-than-the-5-most-recent-presidents/) — and the exits haven't stopped. Trump ousted National Security Adviser [John Bolton](https://www.axios.com/john-bolton-fired-donald-trump-tweet-a69a3771-2a62-4b15-a643-76f38d0614fb.html) on Tuesday, saying he "disagreed strongly with many of his suggestions."

**Why it matters:**The first-term revolving door of Trump's highest Cabinet officials is not normal, although some turnover should be expected past the midterms.

1. Michael Flynn

* **Title:**National Security Adviser
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**Feb. 13, 2017

2. Sean Spicer

* **Title:**Communications Director, Press Secretary
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**July 21, 2017

3. Reince Priebus

* **Title:**White House chief of staff
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**July 23, 2017

4. Anthony Scaramucci

* **Title:**Communications Director
* **Start date:**July 21, 2017
* **End date:**July 31, 2017

5. Steve Bannon

* **Title:**White House Chief Strategist
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**Aug. 18, 2017

6. Katie Walsh

* **Title:**White House deputy chief of staff
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**March 30, 2017

7. Michael Dubke

* **Title:**Communications director
* **Start date:**March 6, 2017
* **End date:**May 30, 2017

8. Sebastian Gorka

* **Title:**Deputy assistant to the President
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**Aug. 25, 2017

9. K.T. McFarland

* **Title:**Deputy National Security Adviser
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**April 9, 2017

10. Tom Price

* **Title:**Secretary of Health and Human Services
* **Start date:**Feb. 10, 2017
* **End date:**Sept. 29, 2017

11. Omarosa Manigault Newman

* **Title:**Assistant to the President and Director of Communications for the Office of Public Liaison
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**Dec. 13, 2017

12. James Comey

* **Title:**FBI Director
* **Start date:**Sept. 4, 2013
* **End date:**May 9, 2017

13. Andrew McCabe

* **Title:**Deputy Director of FBI
* **Start date:**Feb. 1, 2016
* **End date:**Jan. 29, 2018

14. Dina Powell

* **Title:**Deputy National Security Adviser
* **Start date:**Jan. 18, 2017
* **End date:**Jan. 12, 2018

15. Walter Shaub

* **Title:**Director of the Office of Government Ethics
* **Start date:**Jan. 9, 2013
* **End date:**July 19, 2017

16. Angella Reid

* **Title:**Chief Usher
* **Start date:**Oct. 4, 2011
* **End date:**May 5, 2017

17. Rob Porter

* **Title:**Staff Secretary
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**Feb. 7, 2018

18. Josh Raffel

* **Title:**Senior Communications Official
* **Start date:**April 5, 2017
* **End date:**Feb. 27, 2018

19. Hope Hicks

* **Title:**Director of Strategic Communications, Communications Director
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**March 29, 2018

20. Gary Cohn

* **Title:**Director of the National Economic Council
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**April 2, 2018

21. John McEntee

* **Title:**Personal Aide to the President
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**March 12, 2018

22. Rex Tillerson

* **Title:**Secretary of State
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**March 13, 2018

23. H.R. McMaster

* **Title:**National Security Adviser
* **Start date:**Feb. 20, 2017
* **End date:**March 22, 2018

24. David Shulkin

* **Title:**Secretary of Veterans Affairs
* **Start date:**Feb. 13, 2017
* **End date:** March 28, 2018

25. Michael Anton

* **Title:**National Security Council Spokesperson
* **Start date:**Feb. 8, 2017
* **End date:** April 8, 2018

26. Tom Bossert

* **Title:**Homeland Security Adviser
* **Start date:**Jan. 20, 2017
* **End date:**April 10, 2018

27. Scott Pruitt

* **Title:**EPA Administrator
* **Start date:**Feb. 17, 2017
* **End date:**July 5, 2018

28. Nikki Haley

* **Title:**U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
* **Start date:**Jan. 24, 2017
* **End date:**The end of 2018

29. Jeff Sessions

* **Title:**Attorney General
* **Start date:**Feb. 9, 2017
* **End date:**Nov. 7, 2018

30. Mira Ricardel

* **Title:**Deputy National Security Adviser
* **Start date:**May 15, 2018
* **End date:**Nov. 14, 2018

31. John Kelly

* **Title:**White House chief of staff
* **Start date:**July 31, 2017
* **End date:**The end of 2018

32. Nick Ayers

* **Title:**Chief of staff to the Vice President
* **Start date:**July 28, 2017
* **End date:**The end of 2018

33. Ryan Zinke

* **Title:**Secretary of the Interior
* **Start date:**March 1, 2017
* **End date:**The end of 2018

34. Jim Mattis

* **Title:**Secretary of Defense
* **Start date:**January 20, 2017
* **End date:**February 2019

35. Raj Shah

* **Title:**White House Deputy Press Secretary
* **Start date:**September 2017 (Previously served as deputy assistant to the president; January 2017-September 2017)
* **End date:**January 2019

36. Brock Long

* **Title:**FEMA Administrator
* **Start date:**June 2017
* **End date:**February 2019

37. Lindsay Walters

* **Title:**White House Deputy Press Secretary
* **Start date:**January 2017
* **End date:**April 2019

38. Scott Gottlieb

* **Title:**FDA Commissioner
* **Start date:**May 2017
* **End date:**Likely April 2019

39. Bill Shine

* **Title:**White House Communications Director
* **Start date:**July 5, 2018
* **End date:**March 8, 2019

40. Linda McMahon

* **Title:**Head of the Small Business Administration
* **Start date:**February 14, 2017
* **End date:**March 29, 2019

41. Kirstjen Nielsen

* **Title:**Secretary of Homeland Security
* **Start date:**December 6, 2017
* **End date:**April 7, 2019

42. Randolph "Tex" Alles

* **Title:** U.S. Secret Service Director
* **Start date:**April 25, 2017
* **End date:**May 1, 2019

43. Sarah Sanders

* **Title:** Press Secretary
* **Start date:**July 21, 2017
* **End date:**July 1, 2019

44. Alex Acosta

* **Title:** Labor Secretary
* **Start date:**April 28, 2017
* **End date:**July 19, 2019

45. Dan Coats

* **Title:** Director of National Intelligence
* **Start date:** March 16, 2017
* **End Date:** August 15, 2019

46. Jason Greenblatt

* **Title:** Special envoy for Middle East peace
* **Start date:** Dec. 23, 2016
* **End Date:** Expected lateSept. 2019

47. John Bolton

* **Title:** National Security Adviser
* **Start date:** April 9, 2018
* **End Date:** Sept. 10, 2019

# Greta Thunberg at UN

[How DARE you!](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/9/23/1887297/-How-DARE-you)



[GretaThunberg](https://www.dailykos.com/news/GretaThunberg" \o "GretaThunberg)

**How DARE you!**

September 23, 2019 ·

*This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be standing here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to me for hope? How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!*

*For more than 30 years the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away, and come here saying that you are doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight.*

*You say you “hear” us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I don’t want to believe that. Because if you fully understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And I refuse to believe that.*

*The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in 10 years only gives us a 50% chance of staying below 1.5C degrees, and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control.*

*Maybe 50% is acceptable to you. But those numbers don’t include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of justice and equity. They also rely on my and my children’s generation sucking hundreds of billions of tonnes of your CO2 out of the air with technologies that barely exist. So a 50% risk is simply not acceptable to us – we who have to live with the consequences.*

*To have a 67% chance of staying below a 1.5C global temperature rise – the best odds given by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the world had 420 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide left to emit back on 1 January 2018. Today that figure is already down to less than 350 gigatonnes. How dare you pretend that this can be solved with business-as-usual and some technical solutions. With today’s emissions levels, that remaining CO2 budget will be entirely gone in less than eight and a half years.*

*There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures today. Because these numbers are too uncomfortable. And you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is.*

*You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us I say we will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.*

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1176148556345774085>

# Whistleblower painstakingly gathered material and almost single-handedly set impeachment in motion

By Greg Miller

The Washington Post

September 26, 2019

The whistleblower’s identity remains obscured, the details of his work for the CIA cloaked in secrecy. But the document he delivered reveals almost as much about the investigative mission he carried out in stealth as it does about the alleged abuses of power by the president.

From the moment he learned about President Trump’s attempts to extract political dirt on former vice president Joe Biden from the newly elected leader of Ukraine on July 25, the CIA officer behind the whistleblower report moved swiftly behind the scenes to assemble material from at least a half-dozen highly placed — and equally dismayed — U.S. officials.

He wove their accounts with other painstakingly gathered material on everything from the intervention of Trump’s personal lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani in the U.S.-Ukraine relationship to alleged efforts by American diplomats sent to Kiev and attorneys in the Office of the White House Counsel to contain or suppress the accruing damage.

On Aug. 12, he delivered his document — a nine-page version of which was made public on Thursday — to the intelligence community’s inspector general, triggering an almost immediate clash between the executive branch and Congress.

Six weeks later, the whistleblower has by some measures managed to exceed what former special counsel Robert S. Mueller III accomplished in two years of investigating Trump: producing a file so concerning and factually sound that it has almost single-handedly set in motion the gears of impeachment.

What the acting DNI told Congress about the whistleblower complaint

“In the course of my official duties,” the whistleblower writes in the first sentence of his complaint, he learned that “the President of the United States is using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.”

The file goes on to bolster that contention with specific language that matches the since-released White House summary of Trump’s call with the Ukrainian president and points to other potential witnesses and grave allegations.

Perhaps the most explosive is the document’s assertion that White House officials used a classified computer system to hide documents that might be politically damaging to the president.

Among them, the complaint says, was the rough transcript of the call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in which Trump urged his foreign counterpart to mount investigations that would potentially deliver damaging information about Biden and his family.

The detailed notes of that call released this week show that the whistleblower’s depictions — having neither heard the conversation nor seen the transcript — were eerily accurate. The contents of the call alone were widely regarded as politically damaging to the president.

The whistleblower report raises troubling new allegations about the call, saying that White House officials quickly moved it from a widely shared internal computer network to one reserved for “codeword-level” records about CIA covert-action programs or other highly classified material.

If true, that could implicate those who directed the relocation of the files and serve as evidence of their motivation: concealing presidential conduct they understood to be problematic and potentially illegal.

A paragraph in the appendix asserts this was not an isolated incident.

“According to multiple White House officials I spoke with,” the document says, White House lawyers had on other occasions used the “codeword-level system solely for the purpose of protecting politically sensitive — rather than national security sensitive — information.”

Trump, speaking at the United Nations in New York on Thursday, disparaged the author of the report, saying that he was “almost a spy” and potentially guilty of “treason.”

Attacking his accusers is one of Trump’s standard tactics when thrown on the defensive. He repeatedly accused Mueller and other investigators on the Russia inquiry of being dishonest, beholden to Democrats and engaged in a politically motivated “witch hunt.”

Significant differences between the Russia investigation and the whistleblower complaint, however, may make it more difficult for Trump to rely on such tactics. Among them are the accuser’s anonymity, the existence of a transcript that many regard as formidable proof of the underlying allegation and the speed with which the complaint has already transformed the political landscape in Washington.

“He’ll be remembered as a truth-seeker,” said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. If and when his identity is revealed, “it’ll be one of those names in the history books and around forever, like Daniel Ellsberg,” who was responsible for the release of the Pentagon Papers.

Trump has all but called for the whistleblower and those who assisted him to be unmasked, despite federal laws designed to protect identities and prevent reprisals in such cases.

“I want to know who’s the person who gave the whistleblower . . . the information,” the president said Thursday.

Other officials have said they are intentionally not seeking information about his identity. Joseph Maguire, the acting director of national intelligence, testified Thursday that he does not know who wrote the document. A Justice Department file related to the case noted that the inspector general found “some indicia of an arguable political bias on the part of the complainant,” but Maguire said he did not question the whistleblower’s motivations.

“I think the whistleblower did the right thing,” he said. “I think he followed the law every step of the way.”

Although his name has not been disclosed, aspects of his background have emerged. He works for the CIA, an affiliation first reported by the New York Times on Thursday, according to current and former officials familiar with his identity and position in the intelligence community.

U.S. officials and an attorney for the whistleblower have asked news organizations to refrain from releasing details about him, citing concerns for his privacy and safety.

In the complaint, the whistleblower describes receiving troubling reports about the Trump administration’s approach with Ukraine from “more than half a dozen U.S. officials” over four months.

But the document suggests that it was only after learning about the nature of Trump’s call July 25 with Zelensky that the whistleblower went from sharing colleagues’ concerns to being convinced that he needed to document and report them.

An approximate transcript released by the White House shows Trump prodding Zelensky to direct his government’s investigative bodies to turn their attention to alleged corruption by an energy company for which Hunter Biden, the former vice president’s son, had served as a board member.

Trump has alleged that the elder Biden used his influence to shut down a corruption investigation targeting the company. The claim has been repeatedly discredited, and there is no credible public allegation that Hunter Biden was guilty of wrongdoing.

Trump also urged Zelensky to “meet or speak with” Giuliani and Attorney General William P. Barr to redouble Ukraine’s efforts to seek damaging material tied to Biden.

“Multiple White House officials with direct knowledge of the call informed me that, after an initial exchange of pleasantries, the president used the remainder of the call to advance his personal interests,” the whistleblower report says.

The document also cites other developments that allegedly troubled White House officials, including the abrupt removal of the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine in May after a campaign by right-wing media entities to discredit her.

Although the report does not describe explicit coordination between the whistleblower and White House officials, it depicts an arrangement in which he so routinely received communications of concern from White House officials that it raises the question of whether they knew he intended to file a whistleblower complaint.

The report refers to a “discussion ongoing” between those troubled by the call and White House lawyers, indicating administration attorneys were aware of internal concerns about Trump’s conduct before the whistleblower complaint surfaced.

The report lays out investigative leads for Congress or other authorities. It notes that there were “approximately a dozen White House officials who listened to the call” and identifies a State Department official — referred to with conspicuous formality as “Mr. T. Ulrich Brechbuhl” — as another participant.

Brechbuhl had joined the State Department only in May, as an adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Beyond his sourcing at the White House, the whistleblower has remarkable insight into the activities of U.S. diplomats and Ukrainian officials. The report notes that Kurt Volker, the U.S. special representative for Ukraine, and Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, arrived in Kiev the day after Trump’s call and proceeded to advise officials there on how to “navigate” the demands of the American president.

The document also traces Giuliani’s extensive intervention in U.S.-Ukraine affairs, including a meeting in Madrid with one of Zelensky’s senior advisers. The Madrid trip was described as a “direct follow-up” to the Trump-Zelensky call, for a fuller discussion of the “cases” mentioned in the two leaders’ discussion.

At its core, the complaint makes the case that Trump was withholding items that Ukraine desperately wanted — including hundreds of millions of dollars in aid and an invitation to the White House — to use as leverage.

The Trump administration had been sending those signals since Zelensky’s inauguration on May 20. American officials who traveled to Kiev to attend the ceremony “made clear” to the Ukrainians that Trump would not meet the new leader until he saw how Zelensky “chose to act,” according to the document. Any meeting or phone call would hinge on the Ukrainian president’s willingness to “play ball” with his American counterpart, the whistleblower wrote.

Greg Jaffe, Ellen Nakashima, Karen DeYoung, Shane Harris and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

# TRUMP DECLARES SCHIFF “COULDN’T CARRY” POMPEO’S JOCKSTRAP IN MEETING WITH FINNISH PRESIDENT

Yes, the president’s impeachment defense now involves jockstraps.

BY BESS LEVIN

OCTOBER 2, 2019

Vanity Fair

U.S. President Donald Trump and Finnish President Sauli Niinisto hold a joint news conference in the East Room of the White House..

Hello and welcome to **day 14 of Ukraine/Impeachment**/“I need a favor”-gate. On day two, we learned that Donald Trump had reportedly asked the president of Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden a whopping eight times over the course of their “perfect” phone call. On day six, Trump admitted that he withheld $400 million in military aid from Ukraine, but not in a corrupt way! Day eight brought the suggestion that the whistle-blower’s “sources” be executed; day 12, the threat of another Civil War if Trump is impeached, and later, the admission that the president is trying to unmask the whistle-blower, whose identity is protected by federal law. And what did the two-week anniversary bestow upon the universe? The president of the United States telling the press that Representative Adam Schiff, who’s playing a key role in the Democrats’ impeachment inquiry, “couldn’t carry” Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s jockstrap, as the President of Finland scanned the room for escape hatches.

To warm up the crowd, Trump told reporters, of the House Intelligence chairman: “He should be forced to resign from Congress, Adam Schiff. He’s a lowlife. He should be forced to resign…. It was all fabricated. He should resign from office in disgrace. And frankly, they should look at him for treason because he is making up the words of the president of the United States. Not only words, but the meaning, and it’s a disgrace. It should not be allowed to happen.”

Then, told that the whistle-blower’s complaint was consistent with the rough readout of his July 25 phone call—which it is!—the president launched into…this:

“No, no he didn't say that, you have to take a look, he did not say that. If you look at what he said he found everything to be very normal. He’s a good man...He found it to be very normal. I saw Schiff trying to go—we all call him “Shifty Schiff,” we don’t call him Shifty Schiff for nothing—he’s a shifty, dishonest guy who by the way was critical of one of the greatest secretaries of state, graduated number one in his class at West Point, graduated one of the top in his class at Harvard Law School, the most honorable person, Mike Pompeo, and this guy was negative on Mike Pompeo. He can’t—you know there’s an expression—‘he couldn’t carry his blank strap’—I won’t say it because they’ll say it was so terrible to say, but that guy couldn’t carry his blank strap. Do you understand that? So you’re dealing with bad people.”

Aaron Rupar ✔@atrupar

· Oct 2, 2019 TRUMP on Adam Schiff: "They should look at him for treason."

Aaron Rupar✔@atrupar

Minutes after tweeting "BULLSHIT," Trump avoids saying the word "jockstrap" because he doesn't want to offend anyone. He then insisting his call with the Ukrainian president that's at the heart of an abuse of power scandal was "perfect."

As an aside, it’s a bit of a head-scratcher that Trump felt squeamish about using the word “jock” just hours after tweeting that impeachment proceedings are “BULLSHIT,” but our very stable president contains multitudes. Elsewhere during Trump’s Oval Office sit-down with Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, who looked like he was trying to figure out if he could slip out of the room unnoticed, Trump claimed, again, that his call with Zelensky was “perfect,” that Nancy Pelosi should spend less time on the impeachment inquiry and more time lowering drug prices, that Democrats “do nothing,” and that he doesn‘t “care” if people are concerned about his threats against the whistle-blower because only “legitimate” whistle-blowers should be protected.

Later, during a press conference with Niinistö, Trump insisted that he watches his words “very carefully,” will be suing the people investigating him, and for the big finish, that “there are those that think I’m a very stable genius,” despite everything that had exited his mouth in just the last hour.

Aaron Rupar✔@atrupar

· Oct 2, 2019Replying to @atrupar Trump says the Ukraine call memo released by the White House is "exact" and "word for word" -- even though it says on the very first page that it is not in fact a transcript

Aaron Rupar✔@atrupar

TRUMP: "There are those who think I am a very stable genius, ok?"

Anyway, given that “blank strap” happened on day 14, we’re probably looking at a day 25 or 26 for the president to tell reporters Schiff can “gargle my blanks,” and day 30 for a literal dick-measuring contest.

# Rant for October 4, 2019

What is being reported:



* 1. NBC News: [**U.S. ambassadors pushed Ukraine to investigate as condition for White House visit, texts show**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=43169b60f7&e=64072a309f)  
       
     2. Rantt Media: [**Trump Asks China For Election Help As FEC Remains Shut Down**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=be5013abeb&e=64072a309f)  
       
     3. CNN: [**Trump raised Biden with Xi in June call housed in highly secure server**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=466d280f34&e=64072a309f)  
       
     4. The New York Times: [**Ukraine to Review Criminal Case of Firm Linked to Biden’s Son**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=376258a0c7&e=64072a309f)  
       
     5. The New York Times: [**Trump Envoys Pushed Ukraine to Commit to Investigations**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=bb905546fa&e=64072a309f)  
       
     6. CNN: [**Pence was told about call between Trump and Zelensky the day after it happened**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=f4758b4c68&e=64072a309f)  
       
     7. The Washington Post: [**IRS whistleblower said to report Treasury political appointee might have tried to interfere in audit of Trump or Pence**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=7193576138&e=64072a309f)  
       
     8. ABC News: [**‘Crazy to withhold security’ aid to Ukraine for political campaign: Top US diplomat**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=17c7c4760a&e=64072a309f)  
       
     9. NBC News: [**Giuliani says State Dept vowed to investigate after he gave Ukraine docs to Pompeo**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=7858b8a1cc&e=64072a309f)  
       
     10. Politico: [**Energy Secretary Rick Perry eyeing exit in November**](https://rantt.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=aaa7034b5e7048382fe9437e7&id=a9c72a65ff&e=64072a309f)

# Impeachment Just Became Inevitable

The testimony of William Taylor confirmed that what seemed improbable just a few weeks ago is now all but certain.

OCT 23, 2019

David A. Graham

Staff writer at The Atlantic

Ambassador **William Taylor’s testimony** to House investigators on Tuesday didn’t answer every question about the Ukraine scandal, but it answered the big one: Will President Donald Trump be impeached?

Impeachment is now effectively inevitable. Taylor’s testimony fleshed out the biggest open questions, including **whether there was a quid pro quo with Ukraine (there was), what it involved (military aid), and what Trump wanted (investigations of the Biden family and the 2016 election.**) Congress has now heard from career civil servants and from political appointees, all telling a similar story, and Taylor removed the last scintilla of doubt. With that, it’s all but impossible to imagine a scenario in which House Democrats don’t vote to impeach the president.

**The remaining questions are how much broader the scandal gets, how much worse the details become, and how many—if any—Republicans get on board with impeachment.** All of these in turn bear on the ultimate question: whether the Senate might vote to remove Trump.

Though Taylor’s account aligned closely with what was already known, he offered more damning detail than had been available in any previous publicly revealed testimony. Taylor, whom Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appointed as America’s top diplomat in Kiev earlier this year, offered an account of how the administration held up military aid while pressuring Ukraine’s president to mount investigations of a natural-gas company on whose board Vice President Joe Biden’s son sat, and of alleged Ukrainian interference in the 2016 election.

With that, Trump’s defenses have failed on every side. Though the president was reportedly adamant that the exchange not be called a quid pro quo, it doesn’t matter what it was labeled, **since it apparently was, in fact, a quid pro quo**. Nor does the excuse that Trump was simply trying to use American leverage to fight corruption stand up. **The president was seeking to aid his own personal reelection prospects using American statecraft as leverage—a clear abuse of power**. (It’s also still possible that the administration broke the law by trying to hold up the funds.) Nor can the president claim ignorance of the scheme, since multiple witnesses have attested to his personal involvement.

“The president used the machinery of government to advance his private interests instead of his own administration’s public policy,” Daniel Fried, a former State Department official in Republican and Democratic administrations, wrote in an email. “Taylor’s statement outlines in devastating detail that there was indeed a presidential-mandated ‘quid pro quo,’ that the substance of the U.S.-Ukrainian relationship was to be made conditional on the Ukrainians acting on behalf of the president’s partisan interests.”

With this information in hand, Democrats have little choice but to vote to impeach. They just have to decide, as my colleague Elaine Godfrey reports, when and on what specific issues.

Any impeachment of a president is an epochal event. Yet this realization is especially surprising because of how quickly it has come. As the drip of evidence has turned into a steady stream over the past two weeks, it’s easy to lose sight of how much the ground has shifted.

Less than one month ago, on September 24, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that the House was launching an “official impeachment inquiry.” At the time, that seemed like a potentially risky move. What led Pelosi to act was that a group of moderate Democratic representatives who had been reluctant to impeach announced that they supported an impeachment inquiry—not necessarily articles of impeachment, or a vote to impeach, but a simple inquiry.

A probe made sense, since the public, and Congress, knew very little about the matter in question. There was a whistle-blower complaint about the president’s behavior, and the White House had been refusing to release it, but the substance of the complaint was still mostly unknown. The White House had not yet released the transcript of a call between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Rudy Giuliani, Trump’s personal lawyer, had been relatively open about his muckraking in Ukraine, but the extent of his hijacking of U.S. foreign policy was unknown. More than half the country opposed impeachment (51.2 percent on average, per FiveThirtyEight), and less than 39 percent of the country backed it.

Since then there’s been a **vast shift in both knowledge and opinion.** It came slowly at first, and then snowballed. First, the White House released the partial transcript of the July 25 Zelensky call, apparently as a last-ditch effort to forestall the impeachment inquiry. Then came the whistle-blower complaint, packed with incriminating details—yet by the writer’s own acknowledgment, based entirely on second-hand knowledge (though the **complaint’s substance was remarkably consistent with the call transcript**).

Over the next few days, **Trump flailed—threatening the investigators and promising to obstruct the investigation, even as he openly committed the same sin of which he had been accused.** But it turned out Trump couldn’t hold the line, and a procession of current and former officials opted to testify to Congress, many under subpoena. Meanwhile, Trump was making it hard for his allies to defend him on other fronts too, **from his green light for a Turkish invasion of Syria to his announcement that he would host the Group of Seven summit at his own Trump National Doral resort.**

Amid the tumult, public opinion shifted quickly. Within five days of Pelosi’s announcement, support was in the black; it now sits at an even 50 percent in FiveThirtyEight’s average, with some polls showing higher support. **Only 43.1 percent oppose impeachment.**

Taylor’s testimony offers several leads for House investigators to pursue, and interviews with other officials have already been scheduled or requested. But there’s no longer a question of whether the House has sufficient material to impeach. Given what they’ve found, Democrats probably couldn’t avoid a vote to impeach even if they wanted to—which some still might.

Republicans are in an even tighter vise. With a few exceptions, elected GOP officials have found it very hard to defend Trump’s behavior substantively. Instead, they have complained about the process, saying that Democrats are too secretive, or attacking Representative Adam Schiff, the most prominent Democrat leading the inquiry. A Daily Caller canvass found that **only seven of the 53 Republican senators were willing to rule out voting to remove Trump from office**.

That caginess might be wise. Neither side knows how much worse the Ukraine story will get with more testimony, or whether evidence of Trump improperly pressuring other countries might emerge. As the past month demonstrates, a lot can change in a few short weeks. One month ago, it wasn’t clear there’d even be an impeachment inquiry. Today, impeachment itself is a near-certainty.

DAVID A. GRAHAM is a staff writer at The Atlantic, where he covers U.S. politics and global news.

# One Summer in America

By Eliot Weinberger

London Review of Books

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In **the concentration camps for migrant children**, they sleep on a concrete floor with a single blanket, often made of mylar. It is so crowded that the older children try to sleep standing so that the younger ones can stretch out. The lights stay on 24 hours a day. They wear the clothes they arrived in, days or weeks or months before. They rarely have soap, toothbrushes or showers. There are rarely diapers for the babies and toddlers who have been taken from their parents. Some are as young as five months. In one camp, five hundred children are confined in a windowless warehouse. In others, they are encaged behind chain-link fences. In some camps, there are no hot meals. There are outbreaks of chickenpox, flu, measles, scabies and mumps, and infestations of lice. There have been seven known deaths this year.

**In the concentration camps for adults**, they wear the clothes they arrived in and have no showers. The smell is so bad that those who work there often wear masks and carry the stench with them when they go into town. In some, the only food is bologna sandwiches or things that are rotten and the inmates become ill. In one camp, nine hundred people are imprisoned at a facility designed for 125; cells designed for 35 people are holding 155. They cannot lie down. They are pressured to sign documents in English they cannot read. The one source of running water in the cell is the single open toilet, where one defecates in the crowd.

The head of an anti-immigrant group, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, says the administration ‘doesn’t want the detention experience to be Club Med’.

On any given day there are at least 50,000 adults being held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centres; at least 20,000 held by Customs and Border Protection, and between 11,000 and 14,000 children under 18 in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. (On their 18th birthdays, they are transferred to ICE.)

ICE detention centres are in every state. There are around 1500 of them, as well as many hundreds of jails, prisons and hotels with which the agency has contracts. The detainees include those who have recently entered the US illegally, those who have overstayed their visas, those who have lived undocumented in the country for many years, and those who are exercising their legal right to asylum. (Under a recent administration mandate, tens of thousands of asylum seekers have been sent to Mexico to wait out the months or years for their cases to be processed.) About 70 per cent of the people held by ICE are in camps operated by for-profit companies. Two of them, GEO Group and CoreCivic, together receive almost a billion dollars a year in contracts. The largest camp for children – Homestead, in South Florida – is a for-profit run by a military contractor, Caliburn International. The anti-immigrant zealot John Kelly – once considered the only ‘adult’ in the White House when he was chief of staff – joined Caliburn’s board immediately after leaving government.

In a televised interview with Vice President Pence, the host reads from an article about the camps in which the children are described as ‘filthy, sleeping on cold floors, taking care of each other because of the lack of attention from guards’. He says: ‘I know you. You’re a father, you’re a man of faith. You can’t approve of that.’ Pence replies: ‘Well, no American, no American, should approve of this mass influx of people coming across our border.’ Pence claims that when he visited one camp ‘we spoke to cheerful children who were watching television, having snacks.’

On his state visit to the UK and France to commemorate the Normandy landing, the president of the United States is **distressed to find that Fox News is not available**, and calls on Americans to boycott an American corporation: AT&T, which owns CNN. On his first night, he wakes up at 1.30 a.m. to tweet that the 73-year-old entertainer **Bette Midler is a ‘washed up psycho’**.

The president says it is ‘fake news’ that there were mass protests in London against his visit: ‘I heard that there were protests. I said where are the protests? I don’t see any protests.’ On Fox & Friends viewers are assured that the booing when Ivanka Trump left 10 Downing Street wasn’t for her at all, but for the national security adviser, John Bolton, ‘and he loves it’.

The president exults: ‘The meeting with the queen was incredible. I think I can say I really got to know her because I sat with her many times and **we had automatic chemistry**. You understand that feeling. It’s a good feeling. But she’s a spectacular woman … There are those that say they have never seen the queen have a better time.’ He later hangs a photo of himself with the queen outside the Oval Office, next to the one of himself with Kim Jong-un.

In an interview in Normandy, the president ignores the solemn commemorations to talk about Nancy Pelosi, the House majority leader: ‘**She’s a nasty, vindictive, horrible person** … I call her Nervous Nancy. Nancy Pelosi doesn’t talk about it. Nancy Pelosi is a disaster, OK? She’s a disaster and let her do what she wants … I’ll tell you her name, it’s Nervous Nancy because she’s a nervous wreck.’ Fifteen other heads of state dutifully sign the D-Day Proclamation at the bottom, but the president scrawls his name across the top.

A well-known magazine columnist, E. Jean Carroll, graphically describes being raped by Donald Trump in the mid-1990s. The president denies knowing her, but after photos of the two of them in groups at social gatherings are produced, he says: ‘**It never happened. She’s not my type. I’ll say it with great respect: number one, she’s not my type**. Number two, it never happened. It never happened, OK?’

The world is appalled by a widely circulated photograph of Oscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez from El Salvador and his 23-month-old daughter, Angie Valeria, lying face down in the mud after they drowned while trying to cross the Rio Grande to seek asylum. The president responds: ‘[Democrats] want to have open borders, and open borders mean crime, and open borders mean people drowning in the rivers, and it’s a very dangerous thing.’

At the G20 summit in Japan, where Ivanka Trump sits at every meeting by the president’s side, a reporter asks the president if he will tell Vladimir Putin not to ‘meddle in the 2020 election’. He laughs and turns to Putin. ‘**Don’t meddle in the election, Mr President. Don’t meddle in the election**,’ he says, waving a finger in a mock scolding. Putin smiles.

The French slyly release a video of Ivanka waving her hands as she tries to enter into a conversation among Emmanuel Macron, Justin Trudeau, Theresa May and Christine Lagarde, who grimaces. It is reported that a ‘friendship tree’, given months earlier by Macron to Trump and ceremoniously planted by both on the White House lawn as a symbol of the ties that bind France and the US, immediately died.

Before the president’s appearance at Yokosuka Naval Base, **the destroyer USS John S. McCain is hidden from his sight**. Its name is covered with tarps and the sailors assigned to the ship, whose uniforms display its insignia, are forbidden to attend a speech by the president. Trump’s loathing of McCain has not abated with the senator’s death, nor has his daily preoccupation with Obama and Hillary Clinton, long past the election.

On an unannounced visit to the Korean demilitarised zone, including a few steps into North Korean territory itself with Kim Jong-un, the president brings along one of his favourite Fox News hosts, Tucker Carlson, as well as Ivanka. Carlson says of North Korea: ‘It’s a disgusting place, obviously. So there’s no defending it. On the other hand, **you’ve got to be honest about what it means to lead a country. It means killing people.**’

Two major hotel chains announce they will not allow ICE to hold arrested families in their properties, as ICE had planned. Marriott International says: ‘Our hotels are not configured to be detention facilities.’ Choice Hotels (Comfort Inn, Sleep Inn and Econo Lodge) says: ‘We ask that our franchised hotels only be used for their intended purpose, which is to provide travellers with a welcoming hotel room.’

It is planned to turn Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a Japanese American internment camp during the Second World War, into a concentration camp for 1400 children.

**Total US student debt is $1.52 trillion and is owed by 44.2 million people**. Total credit card debt is more than $1 trillion and is owed by 128 million households. Forty per cent of Americans do not have $400 in savings they could use in an emergency.

Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner report income of $135 million for 2018. Ivanka earned almost $4 million from the Trump International Hotel in Washington, which unsurprisingly has become a popular spot for administration officials and lobbyists, corporate executives and diplomats hoping to curry favour. It is revealed that Cadre, a real-estate company co-owned by Kushner, **has received more than $90 million since he entered the White House from unnamed investors with accounts in the Cayman Islands**.

The administration proposes changing the eligibility rules to **eliminate three million people from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (food stamps). Half a million poor children will also be deprived of free school lunches.

The federal government has given Southwest Key Programs, a nonprofit organisation, nearly $1.9 billion over the last decade to run concentration camps for children, and it is currently holding four thousand of them in 24 camps. The head of Southwest Key received a salary of $3.6 million last year; his wife received $500,000; a third executive received $1 million. (The head of the American Red Cross has a salary of $686,000.)

In one camp a visiting legal team meets three girls who are trying to watch over a two-year-old boy ‘who had wet his pants and had no diaper and was wearing a mucus-smeared shirt’. The girls say the boy had been handed to them by a Border Patrol agent, who went into their cell and asked: ‘Who wants to take care of this little boy?’

June is the hottest June in recorded history. In the heatwave in Alaska, **masses of salmon die from heart attacks caused by the exertion of trying to survive in warm water.**

The Fourth of July celebration on the Mall in Washington DC is a traditionally apolitical event the president does not attend. This year, Trump transforms it into a ‘Salute to America’, featuring a military parade – inspired by one he personally saw in France and those in Russia, China and North Korea he has seen on television – and an address to the nation by himself. He is particularly eager to have a procession of tanks, but the city streets can’t support them, so they are brought in on flatbed trucks and parked around the podium. There is a downpour and the sparse crowd can barely see the president behind the rain-streaked bulletproof glass, as he haltingly reads a bland speech from the teleprompter. **The event costs millions, taken from the budget for the maintenance of national parks.**

Later, the president says the weather was ‘beautiful in one way’: ‘They learned it was my real hair that day because I was drenched. Well, that is the one good thing. I ran and they learned it’s my hair because I’ve been through every windstorm, sandstorm, “Let’s go over here, let’s go this one, that one, this desert, let’s go to this ocean and get out of the plane. Sir, the wind is blowing at about 70 miles an hour.” I said “Boy, it’s gotta be mine.”’ (**The president, of course, was completely protected from the rain**.)

The president is lobbying to hold next year’s **G7 summit meeting at the Trump National Doral Miami**, whose income has dropped by 70 per cent since the election. **The golf resort had been noted recently for planning to host a tournament featuring one hundred of ‘Miami’s hottest strippers’**. In a mock slave auction, golfers would bid on their personal ‘caddy girl’, who would also be available after the game in the VIP rooms of a local strip club. The poster featured a lipstick-stained golf ball, but the event was cancelled due to adverse publicity.

**The president spends an average of two and a half days a week playing golf at one of his resorts.** The government has paid at least $108 million for these excursions; this includes the rooms and meals for the presidential entourage billed by the Trump hotels. The Secret Service pays to rent the golf carts they use to follow the president on the links.

In New York, as tenants are abandoning Trump Tower, **the Trump campaign is renting office space there at $37,500 a month. The offices are largely empty.**

Border Patrol agents give a three-year-old child actually named Sofi the choice of being separated from her mother or her father. When officers take her father away, the child starts weeping. The officers scold her: ‘You said with Mom,’ they tell her.

Speaking in the Oval Office alongside Imran Khan, the Pakistani prime minister, the president says: ‘If we wanted to fight a war in Afghanistan and win it, I could win that war in a week. I just don’t want to kill ten million people … I have plans on Afghanistan that if I wanted to win that war, Afghanistan would be wiped off the face of the Earth. It would be gone. It would be over in – literally in ten days. And I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to go that route.’

The stock markets of the world zigzag precipitously as tariffs are threatened, rescinded or enacted. In an unexpected consequence of the trade wars, the Evangelical Christian Publishers’ Association warns that tariffs on Chinese imports will greatly increase the cost of Bibles – most of which are printed in China – and cause ‘significant damage to Bible accessibility’.

The president tweets: ‘So interesting to see “Progressive” Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all), now loudly and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run. **Why don’t they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came**. Then come back and show us how it is done. These places need your help badly, you can’t leave fast enough.’

**Three of the four women to whom he is referring – Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib – were born in the US**. The fourth, Ilhan Omar, escaped the civil war in Somalia, was interned in Dadaab, the massive and horrific refugee camp in northern Kenya, and, as a teenager, was one of the few, among hundreds of thousands there, to be relocated to the US. Ocasio-Cortez’s ancestors are from Puerto Rico, which is generally not recognised by the president as being part of the US. Tlaib’s ancestors are from Palestine, which is not recognised by the president. Pressley is African American, and presumably her ancestors came to the US long before Trump’s did.

On Fox & Friends, the hosts chuckle as they read the tweets aloud. ‘Comedian in chief,’ one says. ‘Someone’s feeling very comedic today,’ says the other.

Not a single prominent Republican denounces the statement. Pennsylvania Congressman Mike Kelly says: ‘You know, they talk about people of colour. I’m a person of colour. I’m white.’

The neo-Nazi website the Daily Stormer is ecstatic: ‘**This is the kind of WHITE NATIONALISM we elected him for** … This is not some half-assed anti-immigrant white nationalism. Trump is literally telling American blacks to go back to Africa … All Trump is doing is once again expressing our collective anger … This is what elected Trump and this is what will always be the best way for him to gain support.’

The president tweets: ‘We will never be a Socialist or Communist Country. IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY HERE, YOU CAN LEAVE! It is your choice, and your choice alone. This is about love for America. Certain people HATE our Country …’

The White House counsellor Kellyanne Conway calls the four non-white congresswomen the ‘dark underbelly’ of America. She says that the president is ‘sick and tired of many people in this country’. Asked what Trump was referring to in his tweet, Conway responds by asking the reporter, who is Jewish: ‘What’s your ethnicity?’

It is now part of Republican strategy to describe the four congresswomen, following the president’s tweets, as ‘the face of the Democratic Party’, though all four are serving their first terms and are relatively powerless in the Congressional hierarchy. At a rally in North Carolina, the president repeats his attack on the women. The crowd chants: ‘Send her back! Send her back!’

After the elderly and revered African American congressman Elijah Cummings of Baltimore threatens to subpoena Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump to appear before his House Oversight Committee, the president tweets: ‘**Cummings has been a brutal bully** … Cumming District [sic] is a disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess … the worst run and most dangerous anywhere in the United States. No human being would want to live there.’

It is quickly noted that **Kushner is a major slumlord in the city**, whose thousands of apartments have been investigated and fined for mould, water damage, raw sewage leaks and, of course, rodents. In 1976, the president’s father, Fred, was arrested for neglecting his buildings in Baltimore after white tenants moved out and African Americans moved in.

To mark the 400th anniversary this year of the arrival of the first slaves in the US, Obama had arranged for a portrait of Harriet Tubman, the former slave and abolitionist, to replace Andrew Jackson, the slave owner known as the Indian Killer, on the $20 bill. Steve Mnuchin, the secretary of the treasury, states that this will not be possible until at least 2028 and probably not at all. Trump has a portrait of Jackson hanging in the Oval Office.

As his attacks on Cummings and Baltimore continue, the president says: ‘I can tell you this: **I’m the least racist person there is in the world, as far as I’m concerned**.’

In a rare display of international diplomacy, the president, at the urging of Kanye West and Kim Kardashian West, calls the prime minister of Sweden to try to secure the release of the rapper A$AP Rocky, held in Stockholm on charges of assault. ‘I assured him that A$AP was not a flight risk and offered to personally vouch for his bail, or an alternative.’ The Swedes refuse to release him. In response, the president unironically tweets that Sweden ‘has let our African-American Community down’. He sends the presidential special envoy for hostage crises to attend the trial.

The president has an unlikely conversation with Nadia Murad, the women’s rights activist who escaped Islamic State captivity. She tells him about her life: ‘All of this happened to me. They killed my mum, my six brothers …’ The president interrupts: ‘Where are they now?’ ‘They killed them. They are in the mass graves in Sinjar.’

The president is amazed to learn Murad has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which he covets and believes he deserves: ‘That’s incredible. **They gave it to you for what reason**?’

The president comments on the election of Boris Johnson: ‘Good man. He’s tough and he’s smart. They’re saying “Britain Trump”. They call him “Britain Trump”, and there’s people saying that’s a good thing. They like me over there.’

The president tweets: ‘**Chairman Kim has a great and beautiful vision for his country,** and only the United States, with me as President, can make that vision come true. He will do the right thing because he is far too smart not to, and **he does not want to disappoint his friend, President Trump!’**

On Fox, Tucker Carlson vows to ‘keep fighting’ against ‘global tyranny’: ‘Almost every nation on Earth has fallen under the yoke of tyranny: the metric system. The United States is the only major country that has resisted, but we have no reason to be ashamed for using feet and pounds … Esperanto died, but the metric system continues, this weird, utopian, inelegant, creepy system that we alone have resisted … I’ll accept the kilometre when we accept the Euro: never!’

It is discovered that some 9500 current or former members of the Border Patrol, including its chief, Carla Provost, **are members of a secret Facebook group.** There they make jokes about the deaths of migrants, claim the photograph of the drowned father and daughter is a liberal hoax, imagine throwing burritos at Latino members of Congress, and Photoshop pictures of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez performing oral sex on migrants or Donald Trump.

By law, the children held in camps must be kept under ‘safe and sanitary’ conditions. The Department of Justice goes to court to argue that **the law does not specify ‘toothbrush’, ‘showers’, ‘dry clothing’, ‘soap’, ‘towels’ or ‘beds’, and therefore the government is not legally bound to provide them.** The judges are incredulous.

At his long-awaited appearance before the House Judiciary and Intelligence Committees, Special Counsel Robert Mueller seems tired and fragile. He keeps strictly to the content of his report and refuses to answer a few hundred questions that stray into other territories or are still, he claims, the subject of ongoing investigations by others. He stares blankly as various Republican congressmen yell at him. California Congressman Tom McClintock calls his report shit: ‘**You put it in a paper sack, lit it on fire, dropped it on our porch, rang the doorbell and ran.’**

The morning, with the Judiciary Committee, is **devoted to the ten counts of obstruction of justice for which Mueller maintains Trump cannot be prosecuted** while president but could indeed be tried after he leaves office. Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert – known for believing that Obama and much of his administration were in league with the Muslim Brotherhood and were deliberately trying to bring the Ebola virus to the US, that oil pipelines are good for the environment because caribou like to mate next to a nice warm pipe, and that the military should not admit gay men because they’d ‘sit around giving massages to each other’ and would be too relaxed to fight – is, as usual, irate: ‘If somebody knows they did not conspire with anybody from Russia to affect the election, and they see the big Justice Department with people that hate that person coming after them, and then a special counsel appointed who hires a dozen or more people that hate that person, and he knows he’s innocent, he’s not corruptly acting in order to see that justice is done. What he’s doing is not obstructing justice: he is pursuing justice, and the fact that you ran it out two years, means you perpetrated injustice.’ To which Mueller replies: ‘I take your question.’

The afternoon, with the Intelligence Committee, is devoted to the Russians.

The origin story, as it is known: in March 2016, an obscure Maltese professor, Joseph Mifsud – who has not been seen in two years – told George Papadopoulos, a young unqualified foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign, that the Russians had damaging information on Hillary Clinton in the form of ‘thousands of emails’ they had hacked. Mifsud arranged for Papadopoulos to meet various Russians with Kremlin connections. In May, Papadopoulos got drunk at a London wine bar and told the story to Alexander Downer, former leader of the Australian Liberal Party and then high commissioner to the UK. In June, Donald Trump Jr, Jared Kushner and Paul Manafort held a secret meeting with Russians at Trump Tower. In July, after the hacking of the Democratic National Committee was widely reported, Downer informed American intelligence about his conversation with Papadopoulos. **The FBI investigated and found that there had indeed been Russian interference in the election.** To avoid the appearance of partisanship, Obama asked Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, to join him in a statement revealing and denouncing the foreign intervention. McConnell refused, and the information did not become public until after the election.

The Republicans, however, have an elaborate conspiracy theory, which they reiterate throughout the afternoon**: the FBI, though normally considered a bastion of hardcore conservatism (Mueller himself is a lifelong registered Republican), is actually a hotbed of left-wingers** who were determined to defeat Trump. They facilitated the Clinton campaign, and it was the Clinton campaign which conspired with the Russians. That is, the Russians were pretending to help Trump at Clinton’s behest, so when the partisan FBI revealed the Trump-Russia connection, the Trump campaign would be irreparably damaged. (Putin’s public animosity towards Clinton and the 80,000 pieces of Russian-generated pro-Trump ‘content’ seen by 126 million people on Facebook, the 120,000 pieces on Instagram, and the 131,000 robo-tweets in the two months before the election alone are apparently not factors.) Moreover, the key to the conspiracy is the Maltese professor, Mifsud, whose name is frequently invoked at the hearings, and who the Republicans believe was an FBI plant sent to trap Papadopoulos. According to Devin Nunes, who was chairman of the Intelligence Committee when the Republicans controlled the House – and who is suing a woman for $400 million for creating a Twitter account called ‘Devin Nunes’ Cow’, which makes bovine jokes at his expense – Mifsud ‘really is the epicentre’.

After Mueller testifies, the president, who has evidently been studying philosophy, tweets: ‘TRUTH IS A FORCE OF NATURE!’

The director of the FBI, Christopher Wray, earlier told the Judiciary Committee that ‘Russians are absolutely intent on trying to interfere with our elections’ in the future, and Mueller says: ‘It wasn’t a single attempt. They’re doing it as we sit here.’ A report by the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee states that in 2016 the Russians were engaged in ‘an unprecedented level of activity against state election infrastructure’ in all fifty states, searching for vulnerabilities in the security systems. The report, however, is so heavily redacted that it contains almost no public information. Even the recommendations for countermeasures read: ‘7. XXXXXXXXXXX Build a Credible XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX’ – with the subsequent paragraphs blacked out.

There are eight thousand jurisdictions where votes are tallied in the decentralised national election system. Trump lost the popular vote by almost three million, but won the Electoral College because of a total of 77,000 votes (out of 136,000,000 cast) in three key states. Thus the outcome of a presidential election could be altered by targeting only a few of those jurisdictions. While it has not been proved that this was indeed part of what Mueller called a ‘sweeping and systematic’ attack on the election process, it does help to explain one of the mysteries of the Mueller report: **why Paul Manafort, as Trump’s campaign manager, gave internal polling data about four states (including the three key ones) to Konstantin Kilimnik, who is tied to Russian intelligence.**

The House passes a bill directing $600 million in election assistance to the states, with mandatory backup paper ballots. Other pending bills, most of them with at least some Republican support, require presidential campaigns to report to the FBI any offers of assistance from agents of foreign governments or contributions by foreign nationals; protect against foreign cyberattacks; require Facebook, Google and other internet companies to disclose purchasers of political ads; facilitate co-operation between state election officials and federal intelligence agencies; impose sanctions on any entity that attacks a US election and, specifically, on Russia for its cybercrimes**. McConnell refuses to bring any of these to the Senate floor**.

Moreover, the Federal Election Commission, which oversees and enforces election and campaign finance laws, is now essentially defunct. Its members, evenly divided between the parties, serve six years and must be confirmed by the Senate. Since becoming majority leader, in 2015, **McConnell has refused to confirm any new appointees**. As the members rotate off, there are no longer enough for the legally mandated quorum.

McConnell – now called ‘Moscow Mitch’ in the Twittersphere – has a complicated history with Russian billionaires. After the Senate voted to lift sanctions on Oleg Deripaska – known as ‘Putin’s favourite oligarch’ – with McConnell overriding even Republican objections, it was announced that Deripaska’s aluminium company, Rusal, **would be investing $200 million in a mill in McConnell’s home state of Kentucky.** (In order to have the sanctions lifted, Deripaska had to reduce his stake in Rusal from 70 per cent to 45 per cent, but he turned his shares over to allies and family members, and somehow saved himself hundreds of millions of dollars in the process.) **The chief lobbyist for the Rusal project was McConnell’s former chief of staff. Paul Manafort worked for Deripaska for year**s, but Deripaska claims Manafort swindled him out of $25 million in an investment in a shoddy Ukrainian telecom deal. (There are some who believe that Manafort supplied information to the Russians not just to help Trump, but also to pay off his debt in kind and possibly save his own life.) More than 20 per cent of Rusal is owned by Leonard Blavatnik and Viktor Vekselberg, who were also briefly subject to sanctions**. Blavatnik has donated $3.5 million to McConnell’s Senate Leadership Fund, and also (probably illegally) gave $1 million to Trump’s inauguration**. Vekselberg supposedly donated $250,000 to the inauguration through his American cousin. At one point the largest shareholder in the Bank of Cyprus – where many Russian oligarchs like to keep their money – and also its vice chairman was Wilbur Ross, the current secretary of commerce. A shell company owned by Vekselberg wired $500,000 for reasons unknown to a shell company owned by Michael Cohen, Trump’s attorney at the time – the same shell company which then paid the porn actress Stormy Daniels $130,000 in hush money.

The president says: ‘Mitch McConnell is a man that knows less about Russia and Russian influence than even Donald Trump. And I know nothing.’

McConnell is up for re-election in Kentucky, and wants to demonstrate that he is bringing money and resources into his state. Besides the Russians, he is being helped by his wife, Elaine Chao, the secretary of transportation. **Chao has an aide assigned as a special liaison for Kentucky projects – no other state has one – and has already approved $78 million in grants.**

**The president tells an interviewer that he would certainly take information from a foreign government if it offered dirt on his opponent in 202**0. Reminded that the director of the FBI has said that in such cases the agency should be informed, the president replies: ‘I’ll tell you what. I’ve seen a lot of things over my life. I don’t think in my whole life I’ve ever called the FBI. In my whole life. You don’t call the FBI. You throw somebody out of your office, you do whatever you do. Oh, give me a break – life doesn’t work that way.’

July is the hottest month in recorded history. In Alaska, 2.5 million acres of tundra and forest are burning.

Rod Schoonover, an analyst from the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, is to testify before Congress about the ‘possibly catastrophic’ effects of climate change on national and international security, including the increase of refugees, humanitarian crises, the drain on resources and political instability. He is forbidden to appear by William Happer, senior director of the National Security Council.

Happer, who is also the founder of an organisation called the CO2 Coalition, believes that carbon dioxide stimulates plant growth and actually reduces the greenhouse effect. He has stated that ‘the demonisation of carbon dioxide is just like the demonisation of the poor Jews under Hitler. Carbon dioxide is actually a benefit to the world, and so were the Jews.’ He also refers to his group as the **CO2 Anti-Defamation League**.

Schoonover resigns after ten years at his post, when a ‘senior White House official’ accuses him of ‘desperately trying to undermine this president and the American democratic process’.

Obama established regulations on coal ash, the residue from burning coal, which is filled with arsenic and other chemicals that leach into the water supply, so the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), **now led by a former coal industry lobbyist, Andrew Wheeler, lifts the restrictions.** Wheeler also replaces Obama’s Clean Power Plan with the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, which increases allowable emissions from coal-fired plants. An EPA spokesman says: ‘Under the CPP, the Obama administration actually imposed emissions reductions on each and every state. We don’t believe that’s an EPA role.’

Obama banned the pesticide chlorpyrifos, which causes brain damage in children, so the EPA reverses the ban. Obama instituted regulations to control methane gas leaks, so the EPA eliminates them. After carbon dioxide, methane is the second most important greenhouse gas, and in the short run is over eighty times more powerful than CO2 in contributing to global warming.

Obama raised the target for automobile fuel economy to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025, **so Trump lowered it to 37 mpg.** California and other states, however, have kept the Obama regulations. Seventeen car companies ask the administration not to change the rules, as they do not want to be forced to produce different cars for different regions. When this is refused, Ford and three major foreign companies announce that they will adhere to the California standards. A spokesman for the EPA calls this ‘a PR stunt’.

Obama designated 2112 square miles of wilderness in Utah, including ancient Native American cliff dwellings, as the Bears Ears National Monument, **so Trump reduced it to 315 square miles**. He now announces that the remaining land will be opened to extensive logging, the use of off-road vehicles, and ‘chaining’ – the clearing of land by attaching a chain to two vehicles that drag it along the ground to rip out brush and other plants.

The president speaks to reporters in the Oval Office: ‘We want to find out what happened with the last Democrat president. Let’s look into Obama the way they have looked at me from day one … They could look into the book deal that President Obama made. Let’s subpoena all of his records.’ Trump has often complained that Barack and Michelle Obama received a $65 million advance for their post-presidency memoirs.

He then turns to the inferiority of French wines, which he may tax: **‘I’ve always liked American wines better than French wines. Even though I don’t drink wine**. I just like the way they look, OK?’

**There has been a 75 per cent turnover rate in the president’s ‘A Team’** (senior-ranking advisers in the Executive Office, which does not include cabinet secretaries) in two and a half years. Thirty-three per cent of the posts have undergone ‘serial turnover’ (three or more changes). In the cabinet there have been four secretaries of defence, four secretaries of homeland security, four secretaries of veteran affairs and five secretaries of health and human services. **There is currently no permament secretary of homeland security, secretary of labour, secretary of the army, secretary of the air force, director of national intelligence, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, director of the Food and Drug Administration or director of many other agencies, including all those that deal with immigration and the border**. The president prefers to appoint acting heads, who do not require the confirmation process where their often unusual beliefs and dubious pasts might be questioned.

Among those who do not need confirmation, Monica Crowley, a Fox regular, is appointed as assistant secretary for public affairs at the Treasury Department. Crowley is best known for her claim that Obama was an ‘Islamic community organiser’ tied to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose goal was to impose Sharia law in the US. This was made apparent when he ‘insisted on being sworn in as president with his full name, Barack Hussein Obama’.

The State Department’s chief of protocol resigns when it is revealed that he was intimidating employees by carrying a whip around the office. After an internal poll shows Trump losing to Joe Biden, the president at first denies that the poll exists, **then fires the pollsters his campaign hired.**

Nixon initiated the Endangered Species Act (and created the Environmental Protection Agency), which saved the bald eagle, the grizzly bear, the American alligator, the humpback whale, the peregrine falcon and countless other species by banning development, logging, drilling and mining in natural habitats. **The secretary of the interior, David Bernhardt, a former oil industry lobbyist**, announces that the act will be ‘modernised’: economic factors, rather than exclusively scientific ones, will be used to determine eligibility for protection. The ‘foreseeable future’, written in the act, will not be considered, as it would now primarily refer to climate change. Many species – especially those categorised as ‘threatened’, the level below ‘endangered’ – would be taken off the list. The changes will affect polar bears, whooping cranes and Beluga whales, among many others.

**The president had tried to eliminate endangered species status for grizzly bears, in order to make them targets for the trophy hunts favoured by his sons.** Various tribal nations who hold the bear sacred fight the ruling in court together with environmental groups. They win. Liz Cheney, congresswoman from Wyoming and daughter of Dick, responds that the case ‘was not based on science or facts’, but motivated by plaintiffs ‘intent on destroying our Western way of life’.

Campaign advertisements and literature for ‘Trump 2020’ are notable for not mentioning Vice President Pence. (Among Republicans, he is known as ‘Bobblehead’ for his habit of nodding while the president speaks.) The most ridiculous – and yet not entirely implausible – rumour of the summer is that Trump will name Ivanka as his VP and resign after the election to make her America’s first woman president. Ivanka will then pardon him for any crimes for which he may be liable when he is no longer president. Earlier in the year, Trump offered her the job of president of the World Bank, but she declined. He told reporters: ‘She would’ve been great at that because she’s very good with numbers.’

In order to **wreck the research agencies within the Department of Agriculture that are studying climate change, environmental issues and the impact of the trade wars on farmer**s, it is announced that their offices will be relocated from Washington to Kansas City. More than half the agencies’ scientists and career regulators immediately resign. Similarly, the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management, which oversees some 250 million acres of federal land, is suddenly relocated from the capital to Grand Junction, Colorado, to purge career environmentalists. Its new acting director, William Perry Pendley, is **a lifelong advocate of selling off the entirety of federal land to private interests**. Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff, says that the relocations are a ‘wonderful way’ to get rid of federal workers who would be difficult to fire.

The attorney general, William Barr, announces that the federal government will resume carrying out the death penalty. Although there have been death sentences, no federal inmate has been executed since 2003. (Twenty-one states have abolished capital punishment, but in other states 25 people were executed in 2018.)

Barr later cites the Charles Bronson vigilante movie, Death Wish, and the Clint Eastwood Dirty Harry movies as evidence that ‘it’s satisfying to see justice done.’

At the Gilroy Garlic Festival in Christmas Hill Park in Gilroy, California, a 19-year-old white supremacist, targeting Hispanics with a legally purchased assault rifle, kills three people, including two children, and injures 13 others. (Three of the survivors are also survivors of the Las Vegas shooting in 2017 that killed 58.) Someone shouts to the shooter: ‘Why are you doing this?’ and he replies: ‘Because I’m really angry.’

Six days later, a 21-year-old white supremacist, targeting Hispanics with a legally purchased assault rifle, drives for ten hours to a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, kills 22 people and injures 26. Many of the injured refuse to go to a hospital because they fear deportation. (ICE has been known to arrest people on gurneys and to wait outside operating rooms.) The president briefly tweets condolences, then immediately tweets a message to a white boxer who wears a MAGA hat: ‘Fight hard tonight Colby. You are a real Champ!’ On Fox, the lieutenant governor of Texas says that mass shootings occur because children are no longer allowed to pray in school.

Thirteen hours later, a 24-year-old white man with a legally purchased assault rifle – politics unknown, but largely targeting African Americans – kills nine and injures 17 in Dayton, Ohio. He kills his own sister and her African American boyfriend. With such a weapon, he was able to fire 41 shots in thirty seconds before he was killed by the police.

The president spends the weekend golfing and making an exuberant surprise appearance at a wedding at his New Jersey golf resort. Back in Washington, he tweets that ‘Fake News has contributed greatly to the anger and rage’ and calls for tougher legislation against immigrants – **presumably on the theory that if there were no immigrants there would be no one to shoot.** In a short televised address to the nation, he blames gun violence on mental illness and video games. Although reading from a teleprompter, he confuses his Ohio cities and says ‘May God bless the memory of those who perished in Toledo.’

Shortly before driving to El Paso, the shooter had posted a manifesto online, in which he wrote that he was planning ‘to kill as many Mexicans as possible’ as ‘a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas’. The Trump campaign has used the word ‘invasion’, referring to immigrants, some 2200 times in its Facebook ads. Trump himself, when speaking of immigration at campaign rallies, has used the word ‘invasion’ at least 19 times, the word ‘animal’ 34 times, the word ‘killer’ nearly three dozen times, and the phrase ‘the hell out of our country’ at least 43 times. In another calculation, **Trump has used the words ‘predator’, ‘invasion’, ‘alien’, ‘killer’, ‘criminal’ or ‘animal’ while talking about immigration at his rallies more than five hundred times.**

It is reported that the El Paso shooter’s mother had called the police, alarmed by her son’s behaviour and his weaponry, but was told that his assault rifle was legal and there was nothing they could do.

As of 5 August, the day after the Dayton shooting, **there have been 255 mass shootings in the US in the 217 days of 2019**. A mass shooting is defined as an indiscriminate rampage in a public place where four or more people, not including the shooter, are killed or wounded. So far this year, 8963 people (including 2233 under 18) have died in gun-related episodes. This number does not include suicides. (In 2017 – the most recent year for which there are statistics – 23,854 people killed themselves with a gun.) In the US there are more privately owned guns than people.

At a town hall meeting, Arkansas Republican Congressman Steve Womack blames mass shootings on ‘**too many kids growing up in single parent households’, ‘godless schools’ and the current reluctance to spank unruly children**.

Walmart, in response to the shootings, bans the sale of violent video games in its stores, but not guns. The countries with the highest number of users of video games per capita are Japan and South Korea; both have zero gun homicides.

The Democratic-controlled House passed legislation months ago requiring background checks for gun purchases and other means of controlling guns, but **Mitch McConnell, who has received $1.26 million in campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association, refuses to introduce any of the bills in the Senate.** Immediately following the shootings, his campaign tweets a photo of a mock graveyard with tombstones for Amy McGrath, his Democratic opponent in the 2020 senatorial election, and Merrick Garland, whom he blocked for the Supreme Court.

In the morning, before visiting El Paso and Dayton on a ‘day of healing’ to ‘honour victims and comfort families’, the president attacks the mayor of Dayton; the Federal Reserve Board; a former congressman from El Paso, Beto O’Rourke; the ‘failing New York Times’; the governor of California; ‘Radical Left Democrats’ and ‘Fake News’. He claims that illegal immigrants ‘are pouring into this country’, but also notes: ‘I think my rhetoric brings people together.’ In Dayton he briefly visits a hospital, allowing no reporters and making no public statements.

On Air Force One from Dayton to El Paso, he attacks ‘Sleepy Joe’ Biden, ‘Fake News CNN’, the ‘LameStream Media’, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown and the mayor of Dayton (again). In the hospital he visits in El Paso, all the survivors being treated refuse to meet with him. Talking to the doctors and staff, he attacks O’Rourke, and brags about the crowds at his rally there in February (for which his campaign still has not paid the nearly $500,000 it owes the city). He strikes a smiling, thumbs-up pose next to a baby boy whose parents both died trying to protect him. On Air Force One from El Paso back to Washington, he attacks the ‘disgusting’ Democrats; ‘Fake News’; Congressman Joaquin Castro and his twin brother, Julián, the presidential candidate; Bernie Sanders; Elizabeth Warren and various news

As the president is landing in El Paso on his healing mission, 600 ICE agents arrest 680 people, including many who have been in the US for more than a decade, at chicken processing plants in Mississippi, the largest raid since the Bush era. No owners or managers of the plants are arrested for hiring ‘illegal’ workers.

**ICE, as usual, makes no provisions for the children of the arrested**, many of whom were born in the US and are citizens. The children, unaware of what is happening, return home from the first day of school to find their houses sealed up and their parents gone. Babies and toddlers left at daycare centres have no one to pick them up. In the town of Forest, Mississippi, neighbours and strangers collect the children, feed them and take them to a local gym to spend the night, while the community tries to figure out how to help them, given that the children are now homeless and some may never see their parents again.

Customs and Border Protection rejects countless private offers of donations of soap, diapers and other necessities for the children in the camps. Mark Morgan, acting director of the CBP, says: ‘I’ve been to detention facilities where I’ve walked up to these individuals that are so-called minors, 17 or under. I’ve looked at them and I’ve looked at their eyes … and I’ve said that is a soon-to-be MS-13 gang member. It’s unequivocal.’

**It is announced that applicants for green cards will now be subject to a wealth test.** Legal immigrants will no longer be eligible for permanent residency if they have ever received any government benefits, such as food stamps or Medicaid. Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, who once compared deportations to rat extermination, says that the inscription on the Statue of Liberty should read: ‘Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge.’ He later adds that the actual inscription was only intended for Europeans.

Five per cent of regular viewers of Fox News believe that ‘white nationalism is a very serious threat.’ Among those who do not watch Fox News, it is 72 per cent.

The president repeatedly asks aides to look into **purchasing Greenland** – not as a future Trump property, but as an American colony: ‘Essentially, it’s a large real estate deal.’ The Danish prime minister calls the proposal ‘absurd’: ‘Thankfully, the time where you buy and sell other countries and populations is over.’ The president is furious at the slight: ‘She’s not talking to me. She’s talking to the United States of America. You don’t talk to the United States that way – at least under me.’ Later he says: ‘[They] can’t treat the United States of America the way they treated us under President Obama.’ He cancels a scheduled meeting in Copenhagen.

The president insists that Israel bar Congresswomen Tlaib and Omar from an official visit, because they ‘hate all Jews’. Netanyahu complies. He has already allowed the US ambassador to sit in on his cabinet meetings, which is unique in international diplomacy, and has renamed a barren stretch of land Trump Heights, perhaps in anticipation of a golf resort.

The president retweets an ultra-right commentator who says ‘people in Israel love him like he’s the King of Israel. Like **he’s the second coming of God**.’ Pursuing the messianic theme while discussing his own boldness in instigating a trade war with China, the president looks up at the sky and says: **‘I am the chosen one**.’ It is wondered whether he is referring to Jesus or Neo in The Matrix.

The president tweets: ‘Our great American companies are hereby ordered to immediately start looking for an alternative to China including bringing your companies HOME and making your products in the USA.’ Later he admits to ‘second thoughts’ about his imperial command, while reaffirming his ability to issue it.

At the G7 meeting in Biarritz, the president urges the readmission of Russia, which had been barred after the invasion of Crimea. At a press conference, he mentions Obama 18 times: ‘[Crimea] was sort of taken away from President Obama. Not taken away from President Trump, taken away from President Obama … He was outsmarted by Putin. He was outsmarted. President Putin outsmarted President Obama.’

**The president skips the meeting on climate change**, but reiterates at length his personal money-making scheme to hold the next meeting at his golf resort in Miami, which has fallen on hard times as members defect and reports of bedbugs circulate. On Fox & Friends they are enthusiastic, but have doubts about the weather. One of the friends points out that in Miami ‘during the last week in August … it is pretty darn hot.’ Another notes that it is also hurricane season. But a third allays their concerns: most of the events are indoors and air-conditioned and ‘if you are a world leader people walk with you with umbrellas.’ In the meantime, Attorney General Barr has already booked the Trump International in Washington for a $30,000 Christmas party.

In Biarritz, the president tweets: ‘The question I was asked most today by fellow World Leaders … happens to be, “**Mr President, why does the American media hate your Country so much? Why are they rooting for it to fail?”**’ None of the fellow World Leaders is named and none comes forward.

The US Citizenship and Immigration Services announce that the children of military and diplomatic personnel born in foreign countries while their parents are serving abroad will no longer automatically be considered citizens and must undergo the process of applying for citizenship. This surprising ruling almost certainly stems from the fact that John McCain was born on a naval base in the Canal Zone, where his father, an admiral, was stationed. The president has often declared that McCain was not a ‘natural-born citizen’, and thus was ineligible under the constitution to run for president.

**With the start of the hurricane season, the Department of Homeland Security announces that it is transferring $155 million from the emergency disaster relief fund to ICE to pay for expanded detention camps.**

The president tells Homeland Security officials his idea for preventing hurricanes from making landfall in the US: ‘I got it. I got it. **Why don’t we nuke them**? They start forming off the coast of Africa, as they’re moving across the Atlantic, we drop a bomb inside the eye of the hurricane and it disrupts it. Why can’t we do that?’ The officials say they will look into it.

The US Citizenship and Immigration **Services inform migrant families that they will no longer be eligible for ‘medical deferred action’**. Previously, they had been allowed to remain in the US while their children underwent treatment for cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis or other serious conditions. Now they must leave the country within 33 days or face deportation proceedings.

Since 1980, the US has accepted approximately 95,000 refugees annually. This year the number is 30,000. The administration announces that next year the number will be zero.

Parents shopping for back-to-school supplies may now purchase bullet-resistant backpacks, which come in a variety of colours and feature Disney princesses and Avenger superheroes. ‘The bags offer Level IIIA protection, which means they will stop a .44 magnum handgun, but not a high-velocity rifle.’ According to the manufacturer, ‘We’re not saying, “Buy a backpack, it’ll solve everything.” We’re saying this will put you in a better position in the case of a school shooting than someone who doesn’t have a bulletproof backpack.’ Anti-ballistic three-ring binders are also available.

Marion Hammer, one of the most powerful lobbyists for the NRA, testifies in Florida against a proposed ban on assault rifles: ‘**How do you tell a ten-year-old little girl who got a Ruger 10/22 with a pink stock for her birthday that her rifle is an assault weapon and she has to turn it over to the government or be arrested for felony possession**?’

**Statements written by the children are smuggled out of one camp**:

‘There is no room to move without stepping over the others. We are not given a mat to sleep on so we have to sleep on the cold concrete floor. The lights are on all the time.’

‘We cannot sleep because every 15 minutes the guards are yelling something.’

‘I’m hungry here all the time. I’m so hungry I wake up in the middle of the night with hunger. I’m too scared to ask the officers for any more food.’

‘During the two weeks we have been here, they have let us outside about five times for twenty minutes.’

‘Sometimes, when we ask, we are told we will be here for months.’

Talking to reporters in the Oval Office, a fly circles the president’s face. He swats: ‘**How did a fly get into the White House? I don’t like that. I don’t like flies. I don’t like flies**.’

# A Complete Analysis Of Trump’s 146th Unpresidented Week As POTUS

As more evidence of Trump's extortion of Ukraine surfaces, his actions grow increasingly indefensible. But nevertheless, the GOP persists with gaslighting lies.

by: [**Ahmed Baba**](https://rantt.com/author/ahmed_baba) on November 10, 2019

The Republican Party is standing behind a man who has committed glaringly obvious and public crimes. President Trump **very clearly extorted Ukraine in an effort to obtain investigations of his political targets**. The extortion campaign was explicitly relayed to Ukrainian officials, and this week, it was confirmed by the man who relayed it.

Ambassador to the European Union **Gordon Sondland** suddenly “recalled” that he did, in fact, tell Ukrainian officials that military aid would not come unless Ukraine made a public statement announcing the investigations into the Bidens and the 2016 election. This “recollection” came after Ambassador Bill Taylor, National Security Council official Tim Morrison, and National Security Council official Lt. Col Alexander Vindman testified that Sondland had relayed the “quid pro quo” (extortion).

There was a key report this week from *The New York Times*that revealed President Zelensky had scheduled an appearance on CNN for September 13, where he planned on announcing the probes Trump had requested. Zelensky called it off due to events in Washington (the existence of the whistleblower being made public triggering Trump’s release of aid).

The transcripts of testimony from Vindman and Trump’s former adviser on Russia Fiona Hill were also released by House impeachment investigators this week. They further revealed **Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney’s involvement in the extortion campaign.**

Also, this week, as the **now-shut down Trump Foundation was forced to pay a $2 million settlement, Americans were once again reminded of the con man President Trump really is.**

As this week ended, all eyes were on next week’s public impeachment hearings, which should be nothing short of damning for President Trump.

Let’s dive into another Unpresidented week.

**There Are Not Two Sides To The Ukraine Story**

**Day 1,019: Monday, November 4**

President Trump and the Republican Party are playing a dangerous game. As they begin to focus their fire on the identity of the **whistleblower**, we have to take a step back and not miss the forest for the trees. It’s easy to get caught up in every single Trump lie about the impeachment inquiry. We’ve [debunked](https://rantt.com/trump-impeachment-lies-debunked) all of them at Rantt Media. But it’s vitally important for the mainstream media to focus fire on the objectively corrupt conduct of President Trump and not get tricked into giving undue credence to his lies.

When covering President Trump and the GOP’s lies, there must be an effort to actively **avoid falsely equating Democratic and Republican arguments**. You can’t treat vindictive claims on the right that are based on blatant lies as equal to those on the other side. If one side of the argument claims that crimes aren’t crimes and tells Americans not to believe their own eyes, the media cannot cover this as a legitimate political “strategy.”  President Trump, the Republican Party, and right-wing media no longer exist in an objective reality and should be treated as such.

Either way you look at it, **Donald Trump’s extortion of Ukraine is illegal and impeachable.** The President of the United States abused his power in an effort to extort the Ukrainian government to investigate his political targets. The President and his allies in his administration subsequently sought to cover up that corrupt activity. After a whistleblower exposed the truth of this effort, the White House released a transcript memo confirming the President explicitly requested these investigations from the Ukranian President amid withheld military aid.

[Multiple witnesses](https://rantt.com/trumps-145th-week-as-potus-impeachment) have confirmed that there was not only a quid pro quo (extortion) campaign mounted to pressure Ukraine, but that **President Trump was directly overseeing it.** Donald Trump acted to further his personal interests in spite of the illegality of his actions and undermined American foreign policy in the process. Meanwhile, the Trump Administration and Republicans have launched a depraved disinformation campaign smearing the witnesses, including a Purple Heart veteran, and the whistleblower who sparked this saga.

Every single one of their arguments against the impeachment inquiry are in bad faith and not based in truth, but there is still coverage on some mainstream outlets that give their lies equal airtime without debunking them. While this has largely subsided, there was a period of several weeks where mainstream orgs rushed to legitimize President Trump’s false claims against **Hunter Biden**. That is playing into his hands. All President Trump really wants is an aura of corruption, which is why his administration pushed so hard for a public announcement from Ukraine about the launched investigations.

Many in the media are also avoiding an uncomfortable truth. It’s much easier to say the country is “divided” on impeachment than to say that one side is basing their beliefs on propaganda and lies from a right-wing media loyal to the president. If there was no Fox News, we’d be much higher than 50% of Americans supporting impeachment and removal from office.

Members of the media need to be careful with the language they use that might falsely equate the two sides of this story. For example, when talking about individuals President Trump is targeting, at Rantt Media, we now use the word “political targets” rather than “political opponents.” Vice President Joe Biden is a political opponent because he’s running for the Democratic nomination. Hunter Biden and those on Mueller’s team Trump wants to be investigated are not political opponents. They are political targets.

This story is far from over. When the impeachment inquiry begins open hearings, the American people will hear more of these facts for themselves. This moment is vitally important and we all need to be vigilant. No making the same mistakes that were made during the 2016 election and throughout this presidency. President Trump has lied or made false claims over 13,000 times [according to *The Washington Post*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-claims-database/). It’s way past time **to assume first that he is lying, rather than give him the benefit of the doubt, especially when all the evidence proves him wrong.**

***In other news…***

* *Politico*: [**A smear campaign, an untouchable Giuliani and an infected State Dept.: Key deposition details**](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/11/04/yovanovitch-mckinley-deposition-analysis-takeaways-065640)
* *CNN*: [**US begins formal withdrawal from Paris climate accord**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/04/politics/trump-formal-withdrawal-paris-climate-agreement/index.html)
* *BuzzFeed News*: [**Here’s The First Batch of Memos From Robert Mueller’s Russia Inquiry**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.buzzfeednews.com/amphtml/jasonleopold/mueller-report-secret-memos-1)
* *CNN*: [**All four White House officials scheduled for House inquiry depositions Monday won’t testify**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/03/politics/officials-testify-impeachment-house-inquiry/index.html)
* *The Washington Post*: [**Appeals court rejects Trump’s attempt to withhold tax returns from local prosecutors, setting stage for Supreme Court fight**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/appeals-court-rejects-trumps-attempt-to-withhold-tax-return-from-local-prosecutors-setting-stage-for-supreme-court-fight/2019/11/04/567cdb02-f695-11e9-a285-882a8e386a96_story.html)
* *Politico*: [**Trump inches closer to outing purported whistleblower**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.politico.com/amp/news/2019/11/03/trump-again-calls-for-outing-whistleblower-065020)
* *Reuters*: [**Exclusive: Giuliani associate Parnas will comply with Trump impeachment inquiry – lawyer**](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-impeachment-parnas-exclusiv-idUSKBN1XE297)
* *ABC News*: [**Ukraine whistleblower offers to answer Republican questions in writing; GOP calls it not sufficient**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/abcnews.go.com/amp/Politics/ukraine-whistleblower-offers-answer-republican-questions-writing-gop/story%3fid=66730954)
* *The New York Times*: [**E. Jean Carroll, Who Accused Trump of Rape, Sues Him for Defamation**](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/nyregion/jean-carroll-sues-trump.html)
* *NBC News*: [**Trump threatens to pull federal aid for California wildfires**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-threatens-pull-federal-aid-california-wildfires-n1075866)
* *CNN*: [**EPA plans to relax coal power plant waste rules**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/03/politics/epa-coal-power-plant-waste-rules/index.html)
* *Reuters*: [**Ukraine to fire prosecutor who discussed Bidens with Giuliani – source**](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-impeachment-prosecutor-excl-idUSKBN1XE20C)
* NBC News: [**‘Defeated’ ISIS has found safe haven in an ungoverned part of Iraq**](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/defeated-isis-has-found-safe-haven-ungoverned-part-iraq-n1076081)
* *CNN*: [**Justice Dept. is trying to ‘intimidate’ author of anonymous anti-Trump book, agents say**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/04/media/anonymous-book-justice-department-letter/index.html)
* *CNN*: [**FBI arrests alleged white supremacist accused of planning to bomb a Pueblo synagogue**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/04/us/colorado-synagogue-plot-arrest/index.html)
* *Axios*: [**Rep. Jeffries: 250 House-passed bills are in Mitch McConnell’s “legislative graveyard”**](https://www.axios.com/jeffries-hakeem-mcconnell-mitch-house-bills-93d704be-58f4-44c8-89f7-9a8daab492cd.html)
* *The Daily Beast*: [**Putin’s Top Spy: We’re Teaming Up With D.C. on Cybersecurity**](https://www.thedailybeast.com/putins-top-spy-russian-fsb-chief-alexander-bortnikov-were-teaming-up-with-dc-on-cybersecurity)
* *CNBC*: [**Huge Asia Pacific trade deal is set to be signed in 2020, Thailand says**](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/04/rcep-asia-pacific-trade-deal-to-be-signed-in-2020-thailand-says.html)

# The impeachment case against Donald J. Trump, as it stands

By Aaron Blake

November 22, 2019

The Washington Post

The House held the last of its scheduled impeachment hearings Thursday, and we know three major things:

1) that President Trump asked a foreign government to launch two investigations with obvious political benefits for him;

2) that his aides are alleged to have told Ukraine that U.S. government concessions were conditioned on those investigations; and

3) that European Union Ambassador Gordon Sondland, who was in contact with Trump, understood this to be Trump’s will.

Whether Trump explicitly signed off on quid pro quos is something we don’t know, though, and Sondland said he hadn’t heard Trump do that. Some people argue that’s irrelevant. But as the impeachment inquiry enters a new phase, it’s worth taking stock of what we do and don’t know about Trump’s personal actions, as we hurtle toward what appears to be the third impeachment of a U.S. president.

Consider this the case against Donald Trump, as it stands. We’ll update it as new evidence becomes known.

1. **The alleged quid pro quos**

This is the central allegation, and more than half a dozen witnesses have testified to or spoken about there being a quid pro quo of some kind. They indicate it became clear at several junctures.

Generally speaking, this involves Sondland communicating the quid pro quo to Ukrainian officials and telling others that he communicated them. Witnesses have said there were two quid pro quos: one involving a White House meeting that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky badly wanted, and another involving military aid. Both were allegedly withheld to force Ukraine to announce investigations into their own alleged involvement in 2016 election interference and also into Burisma, a company that employed former vice president Joe Biden’s son Hunter. The latter allegation is that the elder Biden forced the removal of a top Ukrainian prosecutor who was investigating Burisma. Both allegations are dubious.

Sondland has testified that Trump’s personal lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani conveyed the quid pro quo involving the meeting. Sondland also said he was merely presuming — in the absence of a logical alternative — that there was also a quid pro quo involving military aid. He said repeatedly that Trump himself never stated these things to him.

Even apart from that, though, there is evidence that Trump might have personally alluded to quid pro quos in his July 25 call with Zelensky.

First, Zelensky suggested he would pursue the investigations, and then Trump quickly indicated he would schedule the meeting Ukraine had been pushing for a very long time.

Second, Zelensky on the call brings up Ukraine’s desire to purchase Javelin antitank missiles from the United States, at which point Trump quickly follows up with, **“I would like you to do us a favor though because our country has been through a lot, and Ukraine knows a lot about it.”**

The “though” could be read as a rhetorical device to shift the conversation to another topic, or it could be read as alluding to a specific proposed exchange.

Acting White House chief of staff **Mick Mulvaney** also admitted the military aid was withheld in part because Trump wanted to see Ukraine investigate alleged interference in the 2016 election, before Mulvaney recanted.

2. **The investigation request — regardless of conditions**

Regardless of whether Trump explicitly signed off on conditioning the aid and meetings, his request of Zelensky was problematic, if not illegal.

On that July 25 call, Trump asked Zelensky to launch the two investigations, including **by explicitly citing the Bidens.** “Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it. … It sounds horrible to me,” Trump said.

**According to U.S. law, that mere request could be against campaign finance law, even if there was never any exchange and also even if the request was never granted.**

“It shall be unlawful for … a person to solicit, accept, or receive a contribution or donation … of money or other thing of value … in connection with a Federal, State, or local election,” the law says.

The Justice Department opted not to pursue the whistleblower’s complaint on this matter, because it determined that it would be difficult to establish the investigations as a “thing of value.”

Sondland, though, testified this week that Trump may not have even wanted the investigations — but rather just the announcements of them. That suggests Trump was looking for political talking points.

3. **The Yovanovitch smear and removal, fueled by conspiracy theories**

There is evidence Trump may have participated in a campaign to undermine his own ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, to create a pretext for her removal. It’s not the central reason Trump is being impeached, but many of the witnesses we heard from publicly believed her removal was a turning point that kicked off the pressure campaign.

Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan has testified in the Senate that **Giuliani engaged in a “smear” campaign aimed at removing Yovanovitch.** Included in that effort was a later-retracted claim by a top Ukrainian prosecutor, whose interview was facilitated by Giuliani associate Lev Parnas, that Yovanovitch had given him a “do not prosecute” list.

We don’t know whether Trump was directly involved, but:

His son Donald Trump Jr. attacked her on Twitter about a month before her removal.

Yovanovitch in her testimony indicated officials were worried that Trump would do the same and that they feared for her “security.”

Perhaps most important, on his July 25 call with Trump, Zelensky thanked Trump for warning him about Yovanovitch. Zelensky said Trump was “the first one who told me that she was a bad ambassador,” and Trump responded by saying, “Well, she’s going to go through some things.”

Trump indicated in a Fox News interview Friday that he encouraged people to be harder on Yovanovitch, though it wasn’t clear whether he meant before or after her ouster. “I said, ‘Why are you being so kind?’ ” Trump said, to which he claims his aides told him: “Well, sir, she’s a woman. We have to be nice.”

As Sullivan and many others have noted, a president can get rid of an ambassador for any reason. But Trump’s team apparently spent considerable time crafting bad reasons for Yovanovitch’s ouster, for public consumption.

4. **The alleged coverup**

Trump has said the Zelensky call was “perfect,” which even many Republicans have disputed. But it’s not just Republicans who are undermining that defense; it’s also the fact that the White House — and arguably the Justice Department — sought to obscure it.

After a number of aides raised concerns about the call, the White House put it in a code-word-level computer server generally reserved for sensitive national security information. (Though current and former National Security Council aides, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman and Tim Morrison, both testified it wasn’t necessarily for nefarious reasons.)

In addition, the White House released the rough transcript only after pressure built based upon the anonymous whistleblower complaint.

As for the whistleblower complaint, it was also withheld from Congress despite an inspector general deciding that it should be shared. After the inspector general determined the matter to be of “urgent concern,” which would require such a disclosure, the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel downgraded the complaint. The director of national intelligence’s counsel also **indicated it was being withheld for confidential and potentially privileged communications, which was understood to mean ones involving Trump.**

We have no evidence Trump was involved in either decision, but there is at least a whiff of a coverup.

5. **The illogical defenses**

There are a few main defenses offered by Trump and his supporters, but they generally suffer from logical flaws. Below, we examine some of them.

His interest in 'corruption’ in Ukraine is obviously self-serving

The Trump team argues that Trump has a very legitimate concern in rooting out corruption in Ukraine. The country has long struggled with it, after all, and the U.S. policy has long focused on that problem.

**But Trump’s interest in corruption in Ukraine is highly selective and blatantly self-serving**. He has yet to call for an investigation there that doesn’t carry benefits for him, and the two probes he has called for are either baseless or are highly speculative conspiracy theories that seem to be intended for political messaging more than anything else.

And in addition to Sondland’s testimony that this was mostly about the announcements rather than the actual investigations, Giuliani in May basically acknowledged this was about benefiting his client more than the U.S. government.

“Somebody could say it’s improper,” Giuliani told the New York Times. He added: “I’m going to give them reasons they shouldn’t stop [the investigations] because **that information will be very, very helpful to my client, and may turn out to be helpful to my government."**

Ukraine was well aware it was being pressured when Trump and Zelensky spoke

Another core element of the GOP defense is that Ukraine didn’t know it was being leveraged. Yes, the military aid was withheld, the argument goes, but it wasn’t clear that Ukraine even knew about it.

But reporting has shown Ukraine was feeling pressure long before any quid pro quos were communicated and even before Trump and Zelensky spoke on July 25. And numerous contacts indicate U.S. and Ukrainian officials were talking abut a White House meeting as if it was connected to Ukraine announcing the investigations.

Put plainly: There are plenty of reasons to think Zelensky knew he was being leveraged:

For one, AP reported that Zelensky met with top aides on May 7 and spent much of the three-hour meeting trying to figure out how to navigate Giuliani’s efforts.

For two, Trump invited Zelensky to a White House meeting in a May 29 letter, but then the White House repeatedly declined to schedule it, even as Ukraine pushed hard.

For three, the whistleblower complaint alleged Trump withdrew Vice President Pence from attending a planned trip to Zelensky’s inauguration

For four, a series of contacts between special envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker and top Zelensky aide Andriy Yermak show them repeatedly linking the investigations to a White House meeting.

And for five, Sondland in a July 10 meeting with Ukrainian officials indicated such a meeting was dependent upon the investigations, according to both Vindman’s and former White House Russia adviser Fiona Hill’s testimony.

As for the military aid, its withholding was first publicly reported in late August (though there are signs Ukraine might have known earlier), and it was released about two weeks later. But Ukraine diplomat David Holmes summed up nicely on Thursday the argument that this was also a quid pro quo.

“President Zelensky had received a congratulatory letter from the president saying he would be pleased to meet him following his inauguration in May,” Holmes said. “And we had been unable to get that meeting. And then the security hold came up with no explanation.”

He added: “And I’d be surprised if any of the Ukrainians — we discussed earlier, you know, they’re sophisticated people — when they received no explanation for why that hold was in place, they would have drawn that conclusion.”

This isn’t limited to rogue actors such as Giuliani

There is reportedly an effort afoot in the GOP to pawn this off on others who were acting on their own, including most likely Giuliani.

But Trump was a very early proponent of the conspiracy theories Giuliani has pushed Ukraine to investigate, and in addition to Sondland saying they were acting on Trump’s will, Giuliani has said he had Trump’s explicit blessing.

Trump first espoused the conspiracy theory that Ukraine, rather than Russia, interfered in the 2016 election in April 2017 — two months before any documented Giuliani meetings with Ukrainian officials. By July 2017, Trump suggested his then-attorney general, Jeff Sessions, should be investigating the matter. He said the same about now-Attorney General William P. Barr in April.

Trump hired Giuliani in April 2018. By May 2019, Giuliani’s efforts to secure investigations involving the Bidens and the 2016 election became public and immediately caused controversy. Giuliani acknowledged it looked bad but said it wasn’t illegal, and h**e maintained he had Trump’s full support, which Trump has never disputed.**

“He basically knows what I’m doing, sure, as his lawyer,” Giuliani said of Trump.

# A Complete Analysis Of Trump’s 151st Unpresidented Week As POTUS

In yet another historic week, House Democrats voted to put articles of impeachment to a full House vote and Republicans continued to put party over country.

by: [**Ahmed Baba**](https://rantt.com/author/ahmed_baba) on December 15, 2019



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY), and President Donald Trump (AP and Wikimedia Commons)

*Trump’s first major typo after winning the election was spelling Unprecedented incorrectly. He infamously tweeted “Unpresidented.” This typo is emblematic of his administration: An impulsive, frantically thrown together group of characters with virtually no oversight. After Trump was sworn in, I started writing the weekly “*[*Unpresidented*](https://rantt.com/column/unpresidented/)*” column, analyzing every day of his presidency. This is week 151.*

“Historic” has been one of the most used descriptors in recent weeks, and this week was no different.

For the fourth time in American history, a President of the United States has had articles of impeachment against him approved by the House Judiciary Committee. And by this time next week, there will have been a third President impeached by the full House of Representatives and his name is Donald John Trump.

The past month of impeachment hearings culminated in marathon sessions this week with the Democrats presenting their closing arguments. On Monday, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing in which Democrats presented the findings of the House Intelligence Committee’s Official Impeachment Report while **Republicans presented their fact-averse counter-arguments.**

From Wednesday night until around midnight Friday morning, the House Judiciary held what felt like an endless public markup session on the two articles of impeachment against President Trump. Republicans spent all of their time repeatedly yelling and screaming their various conspiracy theories and false narratives to no avail. The amendments they tried to put forth were all struck down by the Democratic majority. In a Friday morning 10 am vote, the House Judiciary Committee passed both the Abuse Of Power and Obstruction Of Congress articles of impeachment against PresidentTrup.

As this vote was taking place, Rudy Giuliani, Trump’s personal attorney at the center of the Ukraine extortion plot, was at the White House with President Trump. **Rudy Giuliani had just returned from Ukraine where he was still pursuing probes of Trump’s political targets.** President Trump is still engaging in the conduct he is being impeached for.

We also learned that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is **coordinating the Senate trial with the White House** and they have pre-determined President Trump’s acquittal. They are prejudging the case in order to protect the corrupt leader of their party. From House Republicans’ gaslighting lies throughout the impeachment hearings to Senate Republicans’ authoritarian fealty to President Trump, the GOP continues to show the depths of their democracy-eroding sycophancy.

In other news this week, Inspector General Horowitz presented his findings on the Russia probe, President Trump met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for the second time in the White House, and the Supreme Court has agreed to take up a consequential case regarding President Trump’s tax returns.

Let’s dive into another Unpresidented week.

**House Judiciary Presents Final Impeachment Case**

**Day 1,054: Monday, December 9**



House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Ranking Member Doug Collins (R-GA) – (AP)

Today, House Democrats outlined their final case for impeaching President Donald Trump. Democratic Counsels Barry Berke and Daniel Goldman laid out a clear case that President Trump extorted Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 election by investigating his political targets. Republicans, on the other hand, presented nothing but stunts and false narratives.

While this second House Judiciary impeachment hearing was framed as the Democrats’ last chance to convince the American people to support impeachment, it was actually the Republicans’ last chance to convince them out of it. Impeachment support has remained steady at around 50% and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has [announced](https://rantt.com/why-the-founding-fathers-created-impeachment) that articles of impeachment are in the works. Given the fact Pelosi knows how to count votes better than most, you can bet she has them. Donald Trump will be the 3rd President of the United States impeached in the House of Representatives. When it happens, it will be because of his corrupt conduct and the GOP’s weak defenses, like the ones we saw today.

Aside from pushing the false [Russia-created Ukraine meddling conspiracy theory](https://rantt.com/trump-gop-ukraine-meddling-conspiracy-theory) and attacks on the impeachment process, House GOP Counsel Steve Castor specifically listed four key counter-arguments to the facts Democrats have outlined:

1. Castor claims the [July 25 Trump-Zelensky call](https://rantt.com/trump-zelensky-ukraine-transcript/) shows there was no “quid pro quo” or pressure.

2. Castor cites the fact President Trump and President Zelensky claim there was no pressure.

3. Castor falsely claimed that Ukraine did not know military aid was being withheld on the day of the July 25 call.

4. Castor claims that the hold on aid was released without any announcement of the probes.

I debunked all four of these defenses and more in [my latest analysis for *The Independent*](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/trump-impeachment-conspiracy-theories-hearings-republicans-ukraine-russia-a9239896.html):

Castor spent time during his presentation discussing the debunked allegations against the Bidens and Russia’s Ukraine meddling conspiracy theory. Castor claimed a few Ukrainian officials spoke out and wrote an op-ed against then-candidate Trump in 2016. Those Ukrainian remarks came after Trump said he’d consider recognizing Crimea as part of Russia. Castor then tried to make the case that this was election interference. This is an asinine false equivalency that seeks to conflate a few outspoken Ukrainians with the top-down, Vladimir Putin-ordered, Russian hacking and spread of propaganda reaching millions of Americans.

Another line of defense from Castor was that the $391 million military aid was withheld for a good reason, and that President Trump was concerned about corruption in Ukraine generally. This is contradicted by witness testimony that indicated the aid was withheld to pressure Ukraine and reports that indicate a retroactive attempt to find a legit justification for the hold. That line of defense also runs contrary to the July 25 transcript memo where **President Trump specifically asked for investigations into the Bidens and the Ukraine meddling conspiracy theory, not corruption broadly.** Multiple witnesses testified that Trump was only concerned about those investigations and former White House adviser Fiona Hill testified that “corruption” was code for the Bidens.

Castor also stated that the aid was released for a good faith reason and no probes were announced. In reality, it was released on September 11 after the White House was made aware of the whistleblower complaint and two days before Zelensky was scheduled to announce the probes on CNN. Castor also claimed that Ukraine didn’t know the military aid was withheld until it was publicly reported in August. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia Laura Cooper’s testimony directly contradicted this. Cooper said that Ukrainians sent emails on July 25, the very same day as the Trump-Zelensky call, asking about the withheld aid.

Castor also claimed that there was “no pressure” on the July 25 phone call, citing President Zelensky’s public statements about feeling no pressure. First off, **do you expect the victim of an extortion plot to admit they were being extorted, especially if they’re still at the whim of the perpetrator**? The pressure was clearly implicit on the call since it came in the context of Ambassador Gordon Sondland repeatedly relaying the quid pro quo directly to Ukrainian officials. Also, Ukraine is a country that is dependent on aid from the US. As Lt Col Alexander Vindman testified, when the President asks a country like Ukraine for a “favor,” it’s actually a demand. It’s important to note Zelensky still has not received a White House meeting.

All Republicans have left to grasp on are straws. House Republicans are handing Senate Republicans a tough case to defend. The Senate will likely acquit President Trump, but it will surely be hard for vulnerable purple state GOP Senators to defend the acquittal vote to their constituents.

***In other news…***

* *CNN*: [**Democrats to lay out articles of impeachment Tuesday following contentious hearing**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/politics/judiciary-committee-impeachment-hearing/index.html)
* *The Washington Post*: [**U.S. officials misled the public about the war in Afghanistan, confidential documents reveal**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents/)
* *NBC News*: [**Internal Justice watchdog finds that Russia probe was justified, not biased against Trump**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/internal-justice-watchdog-finds-russia-probe-was-justified-not-biased-n1098161)
* *The Washington Post*: [**The inspector general report just blew up Trump’s lies. So Barr is rushing to the rescue.**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/12/09/inspector-general-report-just-blew-up-trumps-lies-so-william-barr-is-rushing-rescue/%3foutputType=amp)
* *The New York Times*: [**For Trump, Instinct After Florida Killings Is Simple: Protect Saudis**](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/07/us/politics/trump-pensacola-saudi-arabia.html)
* *NBC News:* [**Supreme Court leaves in place Kentucky abortion law mandating ultrasounds**](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/supreme-court-upholds-kentucky-abortion-law-mandating-ultrasounds-n1098181)
* *The Washington Post*: [**Inside Giuliani’s dual roles: Power-broker-for-hire and shadow foreign policy adviser**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/inside-giulianis-dual-roles-power-broker-for-hire-and-shadow-foreign-policy-adviser/2019/12/08/f9ab9c4c-1773-11ea-9110-3b34ce1d92b1_story.html)
* *ABC News*: [**Ivanka Trump and controversial ‘dossier’ author Chris Steele have a backstory: Source**](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/dossier-author-chris-steele-met-ivanka-trump-years/story?id=67597270)
* *Politico*: [**Possible pardons loom for former Trump aides**](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/12/09/possible-pardons-loom-former-trump-aides-078480)
* *TheHill*: [**FBI head rejects claims of Ukrainian 2016 interference**](https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/473766-fbi-head-rejects-claims-of-ukrainian-2016-interference)
* *CNN*: [**Houston police chief criticizes McConnell and Senate Republicans over guns: ‘Whose side are you on?’**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/politics/houston-police-chief-senate-republicans-gun-violence-vawa/index.html)
* *HuffPost*: [**Trump Slammed For Insisting ‘Killer’ Real Estate Jews Will Back Him To Save Their Wealth**](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/jews-denounce-iac-wealth-stereotypes_n_5ded7f16e4b07f6835b4c534)
* *ABC News*: [**Russia banned from Olympics again over doping cover-up**](https://abcnews.go.com/ABCNews/russia-banned-olympics-doping-cover/story?id=67591877)
* *CNBC*: [**‘It’s now or never’: Russia and Ukraine hold peace talks in Paris**](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/09/russia-and-ukraine-hold-talks-in-paris.html)
* *Reuters*: [**Russian forces enter former Islamic State stronghold in Syria after U.S. pullback**](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-russia-idUSKBN1YD0V6)
* *The Daily Beast*: [**A Perennial Congressional Candidate Beloved by Trump World Was Just Arrested on Stalking Charges**](https://www.thedailybeast.com/maxine-waters-trump-loving-challenger-omar-navarro-arrested-for-stalking)
* *CNN*: [**Finland’s Sanna Marin to become world’s youngest prime minister at 34**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/europe/finland-youngest-prime-minister-sanna-marin-intl-scli/index.html)

**Articles Of Impeachment Announced And Released**

**Day 1,055: Tuesday, December 10**



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff (D-CA), and House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) – Associated Press

**Tuesday’s top stories:**

* *The New York Times*: [**Read the Articles of Impeachment Against President Trump**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2019/12/10/docviewer-articlesofimpeachment/assets/amp.html)
* *ABC News*: [**Officer, 3 civilians dead after massive gun battle breaks out in New Jersey**](https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officer-shot-suspects-jersey-city-bodega-police/story?id=67624378)
* *CNN*: [**Democrats announce new US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement with White House**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/10/politics/usmca-nancy-pelosi-donald-trump-trade-deal/index.html)
* *CNN*: [**Growing divide between Trump and McConnell over impeachment trial**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/10/politics/donald-trump-mitch-mcconnell-senate-trial-impeachment/index.html)
* *Politico*: [**Here are the Russia probe conspiracy theories debunked by the DOJ inspector general report**](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/12/09/russia-conspiracy-theories-inspector-general-report-079474)
* *Axios*: [**Trump to meet with Russian foreign minister for first time since 2017**](https://www.axios.com/trump-lavrov-meet-russian-foreign-minister-bbd2dcc2-dd65-4651-95e9-b781e7be4c77.html)
* *Rantt Media*: [**GOP Attacks On Women Impeachment Witnesses Backfire**](https://rantt.com/gop-attacks-on-women-impeachment-witnesses-backfire)
* *Newsweek*: [**Conservative Attorney Group Slams Trump’s AG: ‘Bill Barr Has Grossly Mischaracterized and Subverted’ IG Findings**](https://www.newsweek.com/conservative-attorney-group-slams-trumps-ag-bill-barr-has-grossly-mischaracterized-subverted-1476515)
* *NBC News*: [**Trump blasts FBI director Wray for backing IG report that 2016 campaign probe was justified**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/trump-blasts-fbi-director-wray-backing-ig-report-2016-campaign-n1098841)
* *Vox*: [**Trump gave Russia’s top envoy a White House meeting. He still hasn’t done that for Ukraine.**](https://www.vox.com/2019/12/10/21004622/trump-russia-lavrov-white-house-impeachment-ukraine)
* *Axios*:[**Former FBI lawyer Lisa Page sues Justice Department for privacy violations**](https://www.axios.com/lisa-page-sues-justice-department-peter-strzok-b13b2267-97bd-4b2e-8617-c105805b4dd7.html)
* *NBC News*: [**Pentagon IG opens review into troop deployment at U.S.-Mexico border**](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/pentagon-ig-opens-review-troop-deployment-u-s-mexico-border-n1099071)
* *CNN*: [**Putin’s plan for America is working better than he could have hoped**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/world/meanwhile-in-america-december-10-intl/index.html)
* *CNN*: [**Amazon claims Trump interfered with Pentagon contract in order to hurt Jeff Bezos**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/tech/amazon-pentagon-trump-bezos/index.html)
* *ABC News*: [**Ukraine and Russia agree to prisoner exchange by year’s end**](https://abcnews.go.com/International/ukraine-russia-agree-prisoner-exchange-years-end-additional/story?id=67606202)
* *AP*: [**South Korea says North’s recent test was of rocket engine**](https://apnews.com/6687004b15af8efacc881da94445816a)
* *Bloomberg*: [**U.K. Economy Fails to Grow Ahead of Brexit-Dominated Election**](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-12-10/u-k-economy-fails-to-grow-ahead-of-brexit-dominated-election)
* *NPR*: [**Democratic Governors Make A Big Comeback Under Trump**](https://www.npr.org/2019/12/10/785603938/chart-democratic-governors-make-a-big-comeback-under-trump)
* *CNN*: [**Trump’s former physician files to run for Congress in Texas**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/09/politics/ronny-jackson-files-congress/index.html)

**Marathon Impeachment Debate Begins**

**Day 1,056: Wednesday, December 11**



House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Ranking Member Doug Collins (R-GA) – (AP)

**Wednesday’s top stories:**

* *NBC News*: [**House debates articles of impeachment against Trump**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-impeachment-inquiry/live-blog/impeachment-live-updates-judiciary-debates-articles-impeachment-n1100121)
* *Axios*: [**Prosecutors say Giuliani associate Lev Parnas hid $1 million payment from Russia**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.axios.com/lev-parnas-russia-ukraine-giuliani-15b6d210-a62d-4fcc-b96f-09fc380b9053.html)
* *The Washington Post*: [**Michael Horowitz just shot down a bunch of Trump conspiracy theories**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/12/11/michael-horowitz-just-shot-down-bunch-trump-conspiracy-theories/%3foutputType=amp)
* CNN: [**Federal judge blocks use of billions of dollars in Pentagon funds to build border wall**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/10/politics/federal-judge-military-construction-border/index.html)
* *CNN*: [**2 GOP senators say McConnell will move to acquit Trump, not merely dismiss charges**](https://t.co/jYAiTHZoCP)
* *TheHill*: [**GOP senator blocks bill aimed at preventing Russia election meddling**](https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/473994-gop-senator-blocks-bill-aimed-at-preventing-russia-election-meddling)
* *NPR*: [**Betsy DeVos Overruled Education Department Findings On Defrauded Students**](https://www.npr.org/2019/12/11/786367598/betsy-devos-overruled-education-dept-findings-on-defrauded-student-borrowers)
* *The Daily Beast*: [**Ukrainians: Trump Just Sent Us ‘a Terrible Signal’**](https://www.thedailybeast.com/ukrainians-trump-just-sent-us-a-terrible-signal)
* *McClatchyDC*: [**Suit against Pompeo on Trump-Putin meeting notes to proceed**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article238281008.html)
* *CNN*: [**Whistleblower’s team preparing for possibility of Senate testimony**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/11/politics/whistleblower-impeachment-senate-testimony/index.html)
* The Guardian: [**Senate committee passes bipartisan bill to stop Trump withdrawing from Nato**](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/11/senate-committee-passes-bipartisan-bill-stop-trump-withdrawing-nato)
* CNN: [**Israel heads for unprecedented third election in a year, as Netanyahu clings to power**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/11/middleeast/israel-third-election-netanyahu-intl/index.html)
* *Vox*: [**America’s weak gun laws enable shootings by terrorists and extremists**](https://www.vox.com/2019/12/11/21011462/jersey-city-pensacola-florida-shooting-gun-control-laws)
* *ProPublica*: [**Donald Trump Jr. Went to Mongolia, Got Special Treatment From the Government and Killed an Endangered Sheep**](https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-inc-podcast-donald-trump-jr-went-to-mongolia-got-special-treatment-from-the-government-and-killed-an-endangered-sheep)
* *Time*: [**Greta Thunberg: TIME’s Person of the Year 2019**](https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2019-greta-thunberg/)
* *Reuters*: [**China imprisoned more journalists than any other country in 2019 – CPJ**](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-rights-journalists-graphic-idUSKBN1YF0KA)
* *The Sydney Morning Herald*: [**Sydney climate protest: Town Hall swamped with demonstrators as thousands demand action**](https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-is-angry-protesters-march-to-demand-urgent-action-on-climate-change-20191211-p53iyc.html)
* *CNBC*: [**Pound shaken as UK election poll puts Johnson outright win in doubt**](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/11/uk-election-polls-put-conservative-majority-in-doubt.html)
* *Vox*: [**Amazon warehouse workers say they’re doing “back-breaking” work without paid time off**](https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/12/10/21005098/amazon-warehouse-workers-sacramento)
* *Mediaite*: [**The Defense Rests: GOP Leaders Reportedly Considering Not Calling a Single Witness in Trump Senate Impeachment Trial**](https://www.mediaite.com/politics/the-defense-rests-gop-leaders-reportedly-considering-not-calling-a-single-witness-in-trump-senate-impeachment-trial/)

**Marathon Impeachment Debate Continues**

**Day 1,057: Thursday, December 12**



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY), and President Donald Trump (AP and Wikimedia Commons)

**Thursday’s top stories:**

* *The Washington Post:* [**Impeachment live updates: House Judiciary panel debates Trump’s Ukraine conduct as it moves toward approval of articles of impeachment**](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-impeachment-live-updates/2019/12/12/f24545e6-1cca-11ea-8d58-5ac3600967a1_story.html)
* *NBC News*: [**Trump mocks Greta Thunberg after she wins Time Person of the Year**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-mocks-greta-thunberg-after-she-wins-time-person-year-n1100531)
* *Vox*: [**Gaetz’s effort to make the impeachment hearing about Hunter Biden’s problems backfired spectacularly**](https://www.vox.com/2019/12/12/21013053/matt-gaetz-hank-johnson-hunter-biden-impeachment-hearings)
* *NBC News*: [**GOP Rep. Gohmert publicly names person some Republicans say is whistleblower**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-impeachment-inquiry/gop-rep-gohmert-publicly-names-person-some-republicans-say-whistleblower-n1100281)
* *ABC News*: [**Heavily redacted communications on withholding of Ukraine aid released**](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/heavily-redacted-communications-withholding-ukraine-aid-released-trump/story?id=67669236)
* *NBC News*: [**McConnell’s dilemma: Senate trial with Trump’s witnesses, or a quick vote**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-impeachment-inquiry/mcconnell-s-dilemma-senate-trial-trump-witnesses-or-quick-vote-n1100011)
* *Los Angeles Times*: [**Millions in military aid at center of impeachment hasn’t reached Ukraine**](https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2019-12-12/millions-in-military-aid-at-center-of-impeachment-hasnt-reached-ukraine)
* *CNN*: [**Trump signs off in principle on tentative China trade deal agreement**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/12/politics/us-china-phase-one-trade-deal/index.html)
* *Politico*: [**Trump tightens grips on judges as McConnell wins 50th Circuit pick**](https://www.politico.com/news/2019/12/12/trump-judges-mcconnell-circuit-082836)
* *ABC News*: [**Trump considering adding Alan Dershowitz to impeachment legal team: Sources**](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-trump-adding-controversial-lawyer-alan-dershowitz-impeachment/story?id=67674015)
* *TheHill*: [**Pence’s office denies Schiff request to declassify call with Ukrainian leader**](https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/474220-pences-office-denies-schiff-request-to-declassify-call-more)
* *USA TODAY*: [**Democratic Rep. Van Drew to vote against Trump impeachment, says others could join him**](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/12/11/trump-impeachment-democrat-jeff-van-drew-vote-no/4404334002/)
* *USA TODAY*: [**Senate recognizes Armenian genocide over objections of Trump and Turkish government**](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/12/12/senate-senate-recognizes-arrecognizes-armenian-genocide-over-objections-trump-and-turkish-government/4410046002/)
* *Reuters*: [**Israel bars Gaza’s Christians from visiting Bethlehem and Jerusalem at Christmas**](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-gaza-christmas-idUSKBN1YG2E9)
* *AP*: [**Pentagon tests long-banned ballistic missile over Pacific**](https://apnews.com/92c9f6922c7f9f97dbfdda970ba998e8)
* *ProPublica*: [**Kansas Abandons Technology Trumpeted by Kris Kobach, Trump’s Onetime Voter Fraud Czar**](https://www.propublica.org/article/kansas-abandons-technology-trumpeted-by-kris-kobach-trumps-onetime-voter-fraud-czar)
* *HuffPost*: [**Pastor Who Says Jews Are Going To Hell Speaks At Trump’s Hanukkah Party**](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/robert-jeffress-white-house-hanukkah_n_5df1b1a1e4b01e0f2959c43d)
* *The Daily Beast*: [**Trump Blasts Trudeau and ‘Pain in the Ass’ Macron Behind Closed Doors Following Viral Video**](https://www.thedailybeast.com/trump-blasts-trudeau-and-pain-in-the-ass-macron-behind-closed-doors-following-viral-video)

**Abuse Of Power: House Judiciary Approves Impeachment Of Trump**

**Day 1,058: Friday, December 13**

History has been made. The [House Judiciary Committee](https://rantt.com/the-house-judiciary-committee) has just passed articles of impeachment against President Trump. The [impeachment resolution](https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/democrats.judiciary.house.gov/files/documents/Articles%20of%20Impeachment.pdf) has two articles, abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. It passed by a party-line 23-17 vote and will now move to a full House vote next week. This impeachment inquiry was sparked by President Trump’s [extortion of Ukraine](https://rantt.com/whats-in-the-house-impeachment-report) to interfere in the 2020 election and subsequent stonewalling of Congress.

Donald J. Trump is now the fourth President of the United States to have articles of impeachment passed against him in the House Judiciary Committee. Trump joins the ranks of President Andrew Johnson, President Bill Clinton, and President Richard Nixon. Unlike Johnson and Clinton, Nixon avoided a full House vote on impeachment by resigning. Although President Trump’s obstruction has followed in the footsteps of Nixon, he will not go as far as to resign. So this move means Trump will be the 3rd President in history to be impeached in the House and face a Senate trial.

The vote came after days of marathon hearings in the House Judiciary Committee debating the resolution. The hearings began on Wednesday night at 7 pm, continued on Thursday at 9 am and lasted 14 hours before House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) postponed the vote until this morning.

Throughout the past few months of hearings, House Republicans have pushed the [same debunked false narratives](https://rantt.com/2nd-house-judiciary-impeachment-hearing) while House Democrats have outlined the facts of President Trump’s misconduct. Now, we head into a likely January 2020 impeachment Senate trial where Senate Republicans are set to acquit President Trump in spite of the overwhelming evidence supporting a conviction.

***In other news…***

* *Vox*: [**Amid impeachment, Trump and Giuliani are still coordinating on anti-Biden dirt**](https://www.vox.com/2019/12/13/21020584/trump-impeachment-articles-rudy-giuliani-ukraine)
* *CNN*: [**McConnell and White House counsel agree to coordinate impeachment trial plans**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/12/politics/senate-impeachment-trial-mitch-mcconnell-white-house/index.html)
* *TheHill*: [**House Democrat calls on McConnell to recuse himself from impeachment trial**](https://thehill.com/homenews/house/474487-rep-demings-senator-mcconnell-violated-oath-must-recuse-himself)
* *NBC News:* [**Supreme Court to rule on release of Trump tax records**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/supreme-court-agrees-hear-trump-appeals-subpoena-fights-over-financial-n1101901)
* *CNN*: [**US prosecutors turn to possible bribery charges in investigation over Ukrainian natural gas company**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/12/politics/rudy-giuliani-lev-parnas-igor-fruman-new-york-ukraine-naftogaz/index.html)
* *TheHill*: [**Judge rejects DOJ effort to delay House lawsuit against Barr, Ross**](https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/474476-judge-rejects-doj-effort-to-delay-house-lawsuit-against-barr-ross)
* *CNN*: [**White House further limits officials on Trump’s foreign leader calls in wake of Ukraine scandal**](https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/13/politics/white-house-foreign-calls-crackdown-ukraine/index.html)
* *CNBC*: [**Trump halts new China tariffs and rolls back some of the prior duties on $120 billion of imports**](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/13/trump-says-25percent-tariffs-will-remain-but-new-china-duties-will-not-take-effect-sunday.html)
* *NBC News*: [**House Republicans narrow in on potential Democratic defectors for final impeachment votes**](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-impeachment-inquiry/house-republicans-narrow-potential-democratic-defectors-final-impeachment-votes-n1101181)
* *BBC*: [**New Kentucky governor restores voting rights to ex-felons**](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-50767555)
* *HuffPost*: [**Mitch McConnell Brags About Blocking Obama For 2 Years, Then Laughs About It**](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mitch-mcconnell-blocks-obama-laughs_n_5df32430e4b0deb78b517322)
* *The New York Times*: [**U.K. Election Updates: In Victory, Johnson Promises Brexit and More**](https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.nytimes.com/2019/12/13/world/europe/uk-election-brexit.amp.html)
* *Evening Standard*: [**Hundreds of protesters descend on Downing Street to ‘defy Tory rule’ after Boris Johnson’s election victory**](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/protest-downing-street-boris-johnson-general-election-a4313391.html)
* *Vox*: [**UN climate talks in Madrid have stalled. Countries are blaming the US.**](https://www.vox.com/2019/12/13/21020192/cop25-greta-thunberg-un-climate-change-meeting-madrid)
* *BBC*: [**EU carbon neutrality: Leaders agree 2050 target without Poland**](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50778001)
* *Rantt Media*: [**The GOP Gerrymanders To Uphold Minority Rule**](https://rantt.com/the-gop-gerrymanders-to-uphold-minority-rule)

by: Ahmed Baba

Ahmed Baba is Co-Founder and President/Editor-in-Chief of Rantt Media. Writer of Unpresidented, Ahmed documents and analyzes every day of the Trump presidency. He publishes op-eds in The Independent and his work has been cited in The New York Times, The Washington Post, BBC, The Huffington Post, Yahoo News, Blavity, Newsweek, The Telegraph, and more.

# What’s really going on with the US and Iran?

BY REESE ERLICH

48 HILLS

JANUARY 3, 2020

On Jan. 2 a US drone fired a missile on a car caravan leaving the Baghdad airport, killing Iranian Major General Qassem Suleimani and leaders of Iraqi militia groups. The Trump administration claims the attack eliminated terrorists planning attacks on US forces. But many Iraqis and Iranians consider it an act of war. Who is Suleimani and what impact will his assassination have on the region? 48 Hills talked with Reese Erlich, author of our Foreign Correspondent column, who has reported from Iran and Iraq for 20 years.

48 Hills: Who was Qassem Suleimani and why is his assassination significant?

Erlich: Suleimani was a top leader in Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and headed up the Quds Force, Iran’s elite troops fighting in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in the region. He played an important political role, for example, recently negotiating with Iraqi political parties to select a new prime minister. The US claims he was responsible for killing US soldiers during the 2003 Iraq War.

Suleimani was extremely popular at home, enjoying a 83 percent approval rating within Iran. It’s as if Iran had assassinated Eisenhower during World War II. The Iranians will almost surely retaliate.

48 Hills: What form will that retaliation take?

RE: I don’t have a crystal ball, but we can see what Iran and its allies have done recently. We may see more large demonstrations against the US Embassy in Baghdad, attacks on US-allied shipping in the Persian Gulf and/or assaults on US forces in the region. Ironically, before the most recent US attacks, tens of thousands of Iraqis were demonstrating against Iran’s presence in Iraq. In November, protestors even burned the Iranian consulate in Najaf, Iraq. Recent Trump administration actions, however, have swung Iraqi popular opinion against the US, and the anti-Iran demonstrations have stopped.

48 Hills: Is the recent attack an example of “Wag the Dog,” in which Trump seeks a war in order to divert attention from his impeachment and the 2020 elections?

RE: In the days ahead, we’ll learn more about the internal discussions in the White House leading to the attacks. Trump undoubtedly hopes to rally the country round the flag in his new offensive against “terrorism.” But the current actions are also the logical outcome of Trump’s maximum pressure campaign against Iran launched in 2017. Since Iran hasn’t buckled under unilateral US sanctions, military action is the next logical step for him. Ultimately, it doesn’t matter about Trump’s intentions. His actions are illegal under international law and a disaster for the people of the US and the Middle East.

48 Hills: Who are the “Iranian backed militias,” which Washington blames for attacking US troops?

RE: From 2003-2011, the Pentagon spent billions of dollars training the Iraqi Army. But when the Islamic State attacked Iraq in 2014, the US-trained army collapsed. With ISIS approaching Baghdad, the call went out to form self-defense groups. Iran, with ISIS also approaching its borders in northeastern Iraq, armed and trained some of these militias. The various armed groups later formed the Popular Mobilization Units and formally affiliated with the Iraqi Army. Today the Iraqi government pays their salaries and provides them with ranks equivalent to the Army.

The US trained and armed its own factions within the Army, most notably the Iraqi Counter Terrorism forces. In Syria, the US armed the Kurdish-based Syrian Democratic Forces and has trained and armed the Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq. It’s rather hypocritical to blame Iran for training armed groups while the US does exactly the same.

In response to US economic warfare against Iran, its allies in Iraq launched mortars and rockets at several bases billeting US soldiers. Then on Dec. 29, the Pentagon bombed the base camp of one militia, Kataib Hezbollah, claiming the group was controlled by Iran. Kataib Hezbollah is also a unit of the Iraqi Army.

Just prior to the Dec. 29 bombing, which killed 19 and wounded 35, the Trump administration consulted with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Israel–but not Iraq. Understandably, Iraqis across the political spectrum criticized the bombing and assassination of Suleimani as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. The US seems intent on fighting Iran on Iraqi soil.

48 Hills: Does Iran pose a danger to US national interests?

RE: Iran’s government is a right-wing, religious-based regime that represses its own people. It seeks regional influence, mainly in countries with large Shia populations such as Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Bahrain, but also Syria. Washington cares little about human rights violations in Iran or anywhere else. It wants to reestablish a pro-US regime in Iran that will allow US oil companies to once again dominate the economy. The people of the US have no national interest in protecting oil company profits. Recent events have shown that people in the region don’t want to be dominated by any foreign power, whether the US or Iran.

Reese Erlich’s nationally distributed column, Foreign Correspondent, appears every two weeks in 48 Hills. He is author of The Iran Agenda Today: The Real Story Inside Iran and What’s Wrong with U.S. Policy.

# Impeachment trial opens as watchdog says Trump broke law on Ukraine

[**Trump ‘knew exactly what was going on’ in Ukraine, says Giuliani associate**](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/15/lev-parnas-ukraine-donald-trump-rudy-giuliani)

[**Tom McCarthy**](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/tommccarthy)*in New York and*[**Lauren Gambino**](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/lauren-gambino)*and*[**David Smith**](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/davidsmith)*in Washington*

16 Jan 2020

The Guardian

As the Senate opened an impeachment trial in which [Donald Trump](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/donaldtrump) will stand charged with abusing the power of his office, the president was hit with new allegations of wrongdoing by an agency within Trump’s own administration.

The Government Accountability Office [released a finding](https://www.gao.gov/assets/710/703909.pdf) on Thursday morning that the **suspension last year of military aid for Ukraine at Trump’s direction violated laws governing the disbursement of congressionally appropriated funds.**



**Impeachment: even the Senate's oath is controversial in hyperpartisan age**

Trump caused the law to be broken, the agency found. The White House did not immediately respond to the allegation of criminality.

The opening of the Senate trial on Thursday brought the impeachment inquiry closer to its climax, nearly four months after Nancy Pelosi announced the investigation into Trump’s alleged scheme to pressure Ukraine to investigate his political rival Joe Biden.

Trump, only the third president in US history to have been impeached, now faces a trial due to begin next week. The proceedings could result in the president’s removal from office – [but that is seen as unlikely](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/14/trump-impeachment-pelosi-articles-senate-whats-next).  
A group of seven impeachment managers from the House, led by the intelligence chair, Adam Schiff, arrived just after noon to the Senate chamber, where they were announced by the sergeant at arms, Paul Irving, reading from a historic script.

“Hear ye, hear ye,” Irving said. ‘‘All persons are commanded to keep silence, on pain of imprisonment, while the [House of Representatives](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/house-of-representatives) is exhibiting to the Senate of the United States articles of impeachment against Donald John Trump.”

Schiff then read the articles of impeachment – the first charging abuse of power, the second charging obstruction of Congress – to the senators, each of whom was seated at her or his individual desk.

Later, the [US supreme court’s chief justice, John Roberts](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/03/trump-impeachment-john-roberts-chief-justice-trial), was sworn in for his presiding role at the trial. He then swore in the 100 senators – 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats and two independents – as jurors. Each senator signed an “oath book” signifying a pledge of impartiality.

The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, moved for a summons to be sent to Trump, who was given until 6pm on Saturday to file an answer with the secretary of the Senate. House managers were given until 5pm on Saturday to file briefs in the case, with White House briefs required the next day and any House rebuttal due by noon on Tuesday.

The Senate planned to reconvene for the trial at 1pm Tuesday, following the Martin Luther King Jr holiday.

A two-thirds majority of voting senators would be required to convict Trump and remove him from office, but he appears to be extremely well insulated against that possibility by Republican loyalists.



 Protesters inside the Senate building call for Donald Trump’s removal. Photograph: Michael McCoy/Reuters

Despite his declaration last month that he could not be an “impartial juror” in the case, McConnell vowed on Wednesday night that each senator would weigh the case against Trump with care.

“We’ll pledge to rise above the petty factionalism and do justice for our institutions, for our states and for the nation,” McConnell said.

But McConnell was back in his partisan foxhole on Thursday morning, vowing that the Senate would check the “runaway passions” of the House and indicating that he would continue to press for a trial limited in scope.

“Now they want the Senate to redo their homework and rerun the investigation,” McConnell said. “It’s not what this process will be going forward.

“The House’s hour is over. The Senate’s time is at hand.”

The White House released a statement on Wednesday that said “President Trump has done nothing wrong” and “expects to be fully exonerated”.

Extraordinary restrictions were in effect on Capitol grounds, including the penning of reporters in the halls of the Senate. Their attempts to interview members of Congress were interrupted by an unusual number of police officers on the scene.

The Government Accountability Office finding that Trump’s Office of Management and Budget had broken the law by withholding aid to Ukraine did not pose an immediate legal hazard for Trump personally, and the president has not been charged with a crime.

But the finding could impose further stress on Trump’s Senate Republican defenders, who even before the trial began were [lashing out](https://twitter.com/TVietor08/status/1217826582821126144)at reporters asking about the continuing stream of evidence damaging to Trump.

The team of [impeachment managers](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/15/who-are-impeachment-managers-trump-senate-trial) is led by Schiff and the judiciary committee chair, Jerry Nadler. Trump has reportedly tapped the White House counsel, Pat Cipollone, to lead his team.

The managers delivered the articles of impeachment to the Senate in a ceremonial procession on Wednesday evening. “We are here today to cross a very important threshold in American history,” Pelosi, the House speaker, said before a vote to transmit the articles.

The second-ranking member of the Senate, Chuck Grassley of Iowa, swore in Roberts on Thursday. The chief justice then administered this oath to the senators:

*I solemnly swear that in all things appertaining to the trial of the impeachment of Donald Trump, now pending, I will do impartial justice according to the constitution and laws: so help me God.*

Addressing her colleagues on the House floor on Wednesday, Pelosi sharply rejected criticism by Republicans that she had delayed transmission of the articles.

“Don’t talk to me about my timing,” she said. After months of resisting calls “from across the country” for Trump’s impeachment, she said, Trump ultimately “gave us no choice. He gave us no choice.”

Trump was impeached in December for an alleged scheme in which he pressured [Ukraine](https://www.theguardian.com/world/ukraine) to announce false investigations of the former vice-president [Biden](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/joebiden) and then fought an inquiry into the scheme.

No US president has ever been removed through impeachment, though [Richard Nixon](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/richard-nixon) resigned in the face of that prospect.

While Trump’s removal is unlikely, the trial holds political hazards for him. He succeeded in enforcing message discipline among Republicans as impeachment moved through the House last fall, but there were indicators that the conduct of some Republicans in the Senate would be more difficult to manage.

A group of moderate Republicans has [expressed openness](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2020/jan/10/trump-news-today-live-impeachment-pelosi-iran-democrats-2020-election-latest-updates) in recent weeks to hearing from witnesses and a desire to weigh the charges against Trump on the merits. Those positions could quickly wither under personal pressure from Trump, who has directed rage at any suggestion that his conduct was less than perfect.

House Republicans responded vigorously to Trump’s demands that they defend him, offering worshipful assessments of Trump’s conduct, which they said was motivated by Trump’s desire to fight corruption in Ukraine.

But that posture may become more difficult as new evidence continues to emerge of Trump’s alleged wrongdoing.

On Tuesday night, House Democrats released newly gathered evidence including a handwritten note by a Trump associate describing a plot involving the Ukrainian president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](https://www.theguardian.com/world/volodymyr-zelenskiy), and Biden.

**Trump “knew exactly what was going on” in a scheme to pressure Ukrainian officials to investigate Biden, that associate, Lev Parnas**, [told MSNBC on Wednesday night](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/15/lev-parnas-ukraine-donald-trump-rudy-giuliani).

# Donald Trump is being charged with Abuse of Power and Obstruction of Congress. **ARTICLE I: Abuse of Power** The Constitution provides that the House of Representatives 'shall have the sole Power of Impeachment' and that the President 'shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. In his conduct of the office of President of the United States—and in violation of his constitutional oath faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed—Donald J. Trump has abused the powers of the Presidency, in that: Using the powers of his high office, President Trump solicited the interference of a foreign government, Ukraine, in the 2020 United States Presidential election. He did so through a scheme or course of conduct that included soliciting the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations that would benefit his reelection, harm the election prospects of a political opponent, and influence the 2020 United States Presidential election to his advantage. President Trump also sought to pressure the Government of Ukraine to take these steps by conditioning official United States Government acts of significant value to Ukraine on its public announcement of the investigations. President Trump engaged in this scheme or course of conduct for corrupt purposes in pursuit of personal political benefit. In so doing, President Trump used the powers of the Presidency in a manner that compromised the national security of the United States and undermined the integrity of the United States democratic process. He thus ignored and injured the interests of the Nation. President Trump engaged in this scheme or course of conduct through the following means: (1) President Trump—acting both directly and through his agents Within and Outside the United States Government corruptly solicited the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations into— (A) a political opponent, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden,; and (B) a discredited theory promoted by Russia alleging that Ukraine—rather than Russia—interfered in the 2016 United States Presidential election. (2) With the same corrupt motives, President Trump—acting both directly and through his agents within and outside the United States Government—conditioned two official acts on the public announcements that he had requested— (A) the release of $391 million of United States taxpayer funds that Congress had appropriated on a bipartisan basis for the purpose of providing vital military and security assistance to Ukraine to oppose Russian aggression and which President Trump had ordered suspended; and (B) a head of state meeting at the White House, which the President of Ukraine sought to demonstrate continued United States support for the Government of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression. (3) Faced with the public revelation of his actions, President Trump ultimately released the military and security assistance to the Government of Ukraine, but has persisted in openly and corruptly urging and soliciting Ukraine to undertake investigations for his personal political benefit. These actions were consistent with President Trump's previous invitations of foreign interference in United States elections. In all of this, President Trump abused the powers of the Presidency by ignoring and injuring national security and other vital national interests to obtain an improper personal political benefit. He has also betrayed the Nation by abusing his high office to enlist a foreign power in corrupting democratic elections. Wherefore President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain a threat to national security and the Constitution if allowed to remain in office, and has acted in a manner grossly incompatible with self-governance and the rule of law. President Trump thus warrants impeachment and trial, removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States. **ARTICLE II: Obstruction of Congress** The Constitution provides that the House of Representatives 'shall have the sole Power of Impeachment' and that the President 'shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. In his conduct of the office of President of the United States and in violation of his constitutional oath faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed—Donald J. Trump has directed the unprecedented, categorical, and indiscriminate defiance of subpoenas issued by the House of Representatives pursuant to its 'sole Power of Impeachment'. President Trump has abused the powers of the Presidency in a manner offensive to, and subversive of, the Constitution, in that: The House of Representatives has engaged in an impeachment inquiry focused on President Trump's corrupt solicitation of the Government of Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 United States Presidential election. As part of this impeachment inquiry, the Committees undertaking the investigation served subpoenas seeking documents and testimony deemed vital to the inquiry from various Executive Branch agencies and offices, and current and former officials.: In response, without lawful cause or excuse, President Trump directed Executive Branch agencies, offices, and officials not to comply with those subpoenas. President Trump thus interposed the powers of the Presidency against the lawful subpoenas of the House of Representatives, and assumed to himself functions and judgments necessary to the exercise of the 'sole Power of Impeachment' vested by the Constitution in the House of Representatives.: President Trump abused the powers of his high office through the following means: (1) Directing the White House to defy a lawful subpoena by withholding the production of documents sought therein by the Committees.: (2) Directing other Executive Branch agencies and offices to defy lawful subpoenas and withhold the production of documents and records from the Committees—in response to which the Department of State, Office of Management and Budget, Department of Energy, and Department of Defense refused to produce a single document or record.: (3) Directing current and former Executive Branch officials not to cooperate with the Committees—in response to which nine Administration officials defied subpoenas for testimony, namely John Michael 'Mick' Mulvaney, Robert B. Blair, John A. Eisenberg, Michael Ellis, Preston Wells Griffith, Russell T. Vought, Michael Duffey, Brian McCormack, and T. Ulrich Brechbuhl.: These actions were consistent with President Trump's previous efforts to undermine United States Government investigations into foreign interference in United States elections.: Through these actions, President Trump sought to arrogate to himself the right to determine the propriety, scope, and nature of an impeachment inquiry into his own conduct, as well as the unilateral prerogative to deny any and all information to the House of Representatives in the exercise of its 'sole Power of Impeachment'. In the history of the Republic, no President has ever ordered the complete defiance of an impeachment inquiry or sought to obstruct and impede so comprehensively the ability of the House of Representatives to investigate 'high Crimes and Misdemeanors'. This abuse of office served to cover up the President's own repeated misconduct and to seize and control the power of impeachment—and thus to nullify a vital constitutional safeguard vested solely in the House of Representatives.: In all of this, President Trump has acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President and subversive of constitutional government, to the great prejudice of the cause of law and justice, and to the manifest injury of the people of the United States.: Wherefore, President Trump, by such conduct, has demonstrated that he will remain a threat to the Constitution if allowed to remain in office, and has acted in a manner grossly incompatible with self-governance and the rule of law. President Trump thus warrants impeachment and trial, removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States.

# Republicans agree Trump is guilty as charged, but they don't care and will vote to cover it up

By Mark Sumner

Daily Kos Staff

January 31, 2020



WASHINGTON, DC - DECEMBER 02: U.S. Senate Majority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) walks with Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) in a hallway after a vote December 2, 2019 at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. The Senate has voted 70-15 to confirm Dan Brouillette to be the next U.S. energy secretary. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

America's future, decided by this pair: Sens. Mitch McConnell and Lamar Alexander

The final night of questions and answers in the impeachment trial of Donald J. Trump has ended. And except for going through the final motions, it appears the same is true of the whole impeachment trial. In the final hour of the evening, as questions were pushed to both the House managers and Trump’s legal team, it became clear that the so-called moderate Republicans were not going to vote to actually hold a trial by calling witnesses. That was driven home when retiring Sen. Lamar Alexander and Alaska’s own Susan Collins Lite, Lisa Murkowski , joined with Ted Cruz and Lindsey Graham to deliver a nail-in-the-coffin joint question to Trump’s team.

That question: Even if Trump did everything that was alleged, even if he set out to gain advantage in the 2020 election by extorting slander from a foreign government and squeezed that government by withholding military assistance in the middle of a hot war, would that be okay? Trump’s team, unsurprisingly, said that was fine. And then Alexander issued a statement agreeing with them. The night didn’t just end with the certainty that Trump will be acquitted, but with an agreement from Republicans in the U.S. Senate that **he is free to do anything—anything—that he wants. It’s not just an acquittal; it’s a coronation.**

Throughout the evening, the House managers continued to make a plea for some form, any form, of sanity. As the night went on, Rep. Adam Schiff outlined a plan in which the House would agree to limit witness depositions to a single week. It would let Chief Justice John Roberts have first say over the appropriateness of every witness and every document. It would let the Republican-dominated Senate have veto power over Roberts’ decisions. It would hold depositions off the Senate floor so they didn’t take up the chamber’s time. It would agree to not try to fight any decision in court.

But on the other side, Trump’s team agreed to nothing. “With all due respect,” it wouldn’t let Roberts make any decisions. Or the Senate. It would fight every witness called by the House in court. It would call “dozens” of witnesses. It would demand that every decision be appealed, appealed again, and would not stop until every decision hit Roberts again, in his role at the Supreme Court. After repeatedly blaming the House for failing to reach “accommodations” with the White House team during the House hearings, Pat Philbin, Pat Cipollone, and Jay Sekulow made it brutally clear **that they had no interest in reaching accommodation on anything.**

Just as they had done in the House, the members of Trump’s team didn’t just hint that they would turn any attempt to get witnesses into an agonizing slog through the courts that could not possibly be settled before the election; they said it. Repeatedly. That they would not cooperate on any point, and would consume the Senate’s schedule indefinitely, was their theme song.

Throughout the evening, the handful of Republican senators supposedly still having doubts was watched closely. It became obvious that **Susan Collins had been given a hall pass** allowing her to try to salvage her worst-in-the-nation popularity through the demonstration of yet another pointless vote. But that moment came during a break in which Murkowski and Alexander huddled together, and a final five-minute halt in the proceedings so McConnell could make sure that he had the guarantee of no witnesses nailed down. It was at that point that the two critical votes joined with the most blatant Trump sycophants in the Senate to demonstrate exactly where they were coming down.

Adam Schiff hurled himself into his next response, clear on what was happening and beginning with, “Let me blunt.” He was. He explained exactly what it meant for Republicans to vote against witnesses, and to do so in the way they were indicating they would. It meant an absolute abdication of the Senate’s oversight role, and the over to Trump of power so great that “imperial presidency” is not a powerful enough term to describe it. Then Trump’s team handled a final response from a large group, making it clear they understood fully. When the final question reached the House team, it was Jerry Nadler who took it rather than a clearly exhausted, disgusted, and heart-sore Schiff.

Shortly after the session ended, Lamar Alexander issued a statement making it clear that he was indeed siding with Trump, on the worst possible grounds. He didn’t dispute the case that the House had brought. Far from it. Alexander said there was no need to bring in witnesses to prove that Trump had extorted slander, had threatened an ally in the midst of battle, and had schemed to put his own interests above the national interest. Alexander found all that worthy of the patented “moderate Republican” tsk-tsk. Then he left the national stage saying that**, even though he believed all that was true, it still wasn’t something to do anything about.**

Some time this morning, Lisa Murkowski is expected to deliver her own statement of tribute.

After all the talk, the dispute came down to one small point: Adam Schiff kept telling the Senate that Donald Trump is not a king. Republicans disagreed.

# They know Trump did it – they just don’t care

Written by David Atkins/ The Washington Monthly

February 1, 2020

So it has come to this, as we all knew it would. Republicans in the Senate have decided to hold a sham trial without witnesses or evidence. It’s not because they don’t want to hear the truth, it’s because they already know the truth. **They know the president is guilty, and they simply don’t care**.

The few GOP senators who pretended at a conscience toward the end have predictably decided to throw in their lot with the majority of their conservative colleagues cravenly engaging in a coverup for the president, while pretending to be deeply offended at the suggestion that that is exactly what they are doing. And why? **Because they fear the wrath of Trump’s base and his twitter feed more than they fear the voters or the judgment of history. And because they simply don’t care.**

The House impeachment managers put on a masterful legal display, embarrassing Trump’s lawyers at every turn. It was an impressive feat blunted only by the fact that the case was so easy to make. Trump’s guilt is obvious on its face. **He obstructed every witness, document and request–**not something that innocent people do. His legal defense attempted to use this obstruction of direct witness testimony to claim that the only confirmations of his guilt came not from hearsay. And then former National Security Advisor John Bolton blew that defense out of the water via media reports. The case, then was open and shut.

The key question at hand was simply whether the Senate wished to hear under oath what former National Security Adviser Bolton was already saying publicly: that Trump was directly responsible for attempting to bribe and extort the leaders of a foreign nation to help him smear a domestic political opponent. They decided not to. Again, this was not because they doubted Bolton was telling the truth, but rather because they knew he was.

Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski decided to take cover behind baseless attacks on the House impeachment process—as if the fact that Republicans in the House were also too cowardly to hold the president accountable had any bearing on the truth of the charges, or as if the president’s attempt to obstruct and delay the inquiry by challenging all witness and document requests somehow rendered illegitimate the House’s decision by moving forward with the damning evidence they had.

But it **was Senator Lamar Alexander’s** reasoning that was most instructive:

Mr. Alexander could easily have gone the other way. He is retiring from the Senate and free to vote as he pleases without political consequences. And he said in the interview that **Mr. Trump had done exactly what Democrats had accused him of doing: He withheld military aid from Ukraine to pressure the country to investigate his political rival — a move he could not condone.**

“I think he did something that was clearly inappropriate,” Mr. Alexander said. “I think it is inappropriate for the president to ask the leader of a foreign nation to investigate a leading political rival, which the president says he did. I think it is inappropriate at least in part to withhold aid to encourage that investigation.”

“But that is not treason, that is not bribery, that is not a high crime and misdemeanor,” he added, listing the criteria enumerated in the Constitution for impeachable offenses.

Senator Alexander also said some fatuous nonsense about how awful it would be to remove a president in the middle of an election year, ignoring the fact that the question at hand was about hearing from witnesses, not about removing Trump just yet. At the same time, he was ignoring the fact that such logic would give a president imperial abuse of power privileges during an entire quarter of his term. But here’s what’s really important: the fact that Senator Alexander chose not only to not convict Trump for having doing the dirty deed, but to refuse to even hear direct witness to the fact that he did it. He simply didn’t care, and neither did the rest of the Republicans in the Senate (except for Mitt Romney and Susan Collins, who in no way get a pass for their vote since they did nothing to persuade others to take a stand for justice and democracy).

But the American people do care. Support for removing the president has risen steadily in polling as the public hears and understands more about what the president did. Support for hearing from witnesses exceeds 70 percent in nearly all polling. The majority of the public understands that Trump committed a terrible abuse of power. The ones still on the fence want to hear more from those in a position to know.

By refusing to hear witnesses, Republicans in the Senate have illegitimized their own trial process. This, in turn, will only encourage the House to continue holding hearings and call witnesses of their own. The embarrassments for the president will not stop. More revelations will certainly come out.

The only thing Republicans can hope for now is that the public will simply stop caring. That’s a dangerous bet. The country isn’t quite that apathetic about abuses of power, nor as desperate as Republican Senators to overlook the worst behavior in the raw pursuit of power.

# [Murkowski embraces the cover-up. In her own words, 'There will be no fair trial in the Senate'](https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2020/1/31/1915456/-Murkowski-embraces-the-cover-up-In-her-own-words-There-will-be-no-fair-trial-in-the-Senate)

[**Laura Clawson**](https://www.dailykos.com/user/Laura%20Clawson)

Daily Kos Staff

Friday January 31, 2020 · 10:29 AM PST



Sen. Lisa Murkowski

Sen. Lisa Murkowski has made the decision we all knew was coming: She’ll vote no on having witnesses in Donald Trump’s impeachment trial. Murkowski’s reasoning for her vote is extra special. The House, [she said](https://twitter.com/burgessev/status/1223309361025617921), “chose to send articles of impeachment that are rushed and flawed. I carefully considered the need for additional witnesses and documents, to cure the shortcomings of its process, but ultimately decided that I will vote against considering motions to subpoena.” Blah blah blah, I’m a Republican posturing about being moderate when the fix was always in.

[Here's where it gets ridiculous](https://twitter.com/AaronBlake/status/1223309692568588291), though. “I have come to the conclusion that there will be no fair trial in the Senate. I don’t believe the continuation of this process will change anything,” Murkowski said. “**It is sad for me to admit that, as an institution, the Congress has failed.”**

There will be no fair trial … and Lisa Murkowski is here to ensure it. As an institution, the Congress has failed … and Lisa Murkowski is not going to think too deeply about her own role in that.

# Cowardice and guilt: Republican senators finally hint Trump may have done something wrong — in the most shameful way possible



*Michael Vadon https://www.flickr.com/photos/80038275@N00/24226605989*

Written by [Cody Fenwick](https://www.alternet.org/author/cody-fenwick/) February 1, 2020

**208**

On the day it became clear a majority of the Senate would allow the trial of the president to close without hearing from a single witness, Republicans who found themselves protecting Donald Trump started making a surprising admission.

Trump, of all people, might have done something wrong.

The revelations started with Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, whose pending retirement gave him more independence than many of his colleagues to break with the president. But on Thursday night, he revealed that he would join most other Republicans in a vote to block the Senate from hearing witnesses, most notably former National Security Adviser John Bolton.

He offered a perhaps surprising reason for this decision, though: He doesn’t need Bolton’s testimony to know Trump’s guilty.

“There is no need for more evidence to prove that the president asked Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden and his son, Hunter; he said this on television on October 3, 2019, and during his July 25, 2019, telephone call with the president of Ukraine,” Alexander said in a statement. “There is no need for more evidence to conclude that the president withheld United States aid, at least in part, to pressure Ukraine to investigate the Bidens; **the House managers have proved this with what they call a ‘mountain of overwhelming evidence.’”**

He dismissed the second charge against the president, obstruction of Congress, as “frivolous.” But he thinks the Ukraine scheme was wrongful.

“**It was inappropriate for the president to ask a foreign leader to investigate his political opponent and to withhold United States aid to encourage that investigation,**” he continued. “When elected officials inappropriately interfere with such investigations, it undermines the principle of equal justice under the law. But the Constitution does not give the Senate the power to remove the president from office and ban him from this year’s ballot simply for actions that are inappropriate.”

To be sure, Alexander is too generous to Trump here. He doesn’t explore the reasons that truly make Trump’s actions so egregious, such as the fact that they were based on nonsense conspiracy theories and were clearly intended to influence the 2020 election.

But he was, at least, finally admitting that what Trump did wasn’t right. He just doesn’t want to say the Senate should remove the president over this kind of conduct.

With this admission, others chimed in.

“Long story short, [Alexander] most likely expressed the sentiments of the country as a whole as well as any single Senator possibly could. Those who hate Trump and wish to take the voters[‘] choice away in an unfounded manner, Sen. Alexander rightly rejected their arguments,” said Republican [Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina](https://twitter.com/LindseyGrahamSC/status/1223260569702215681?s=20), a close ally of the president, in a tweet.

Graham also sent the mildest possible message to Trump, who has claimed his phone call pushing for the Ukrainian investigations that sparked the impeachment proceedings was “perfect.”

“To those who believe that all was ‘perfect,’ Senator Alexander made reasoned observations and conclusions based on the evidence before him. He called it as he saw it to be,” Graham wrote. “Well done Lamar!”

Republican Sen. Ben Sasse of Nebraska bolstered these sentiments further.

“Let me be clear; Lamar speaks for lots and lots of us,” Sasse told reporters, as CNN’s [Manu Raju](https://twitter.com/mkraju/status/1223309110030077953?s=20) reported.

Sasse was once a vocal critic of Trump from within his own party. But as his own re-election grew closer, he began minimizing his dissent, and he earned the president’s endorsement in his primary. So it wasn’t surprising that, when Raju followed up to ask Sasse whether Trump behaved inappropriately, the senator refused to answer.

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) may have gone even further than Alexander, saying in a [Medium](https://medium.com/@SenatorMarcoRubio/my-statement-on-the-presidents-impeachment-trial-9669e82ccb43) post of Trump’s alleged abuse of power: “**Just because actions meet a standard of impeachment does not mean it is in the best interest of the country to remove a President from office.”**

He later said Democrats have not proven their case, but suggested that if they had, Trump’s conduct might warrant impeachment. But he also said that, **even if the conduct does warrant impeachment, he still thinks it would be best for the country to leave Trump in office because “at least half of the country would view his removal as illegitimate**.” He blamed the Democrats’ “partisan” impeachment process for this fact, while ignoring that Republicans’ steadfast refusal to seriously consider Trump did anything wrong throughout the proceedings was a necessary condition of this partisanship.

He also said: “I disagree with the House Managers’ argument that, if we find the allegations they have made are true, failing to remove the President leaves us with no remedy to constrain this or future Presidents. Congress and the courts have multiple ways by which to constrain the power of the executive.”

But like the other Republicans who hinted Trump might have done something wrong, he proposed no actual alternative to removal for holding Trump accountable.

And that’s what makes all their admissions so shameful. They’ve let Trump declare for months that he’s done nothing wrong and that the impeachment is an unfair witch hunt. They’ve even let Trump continue to engage in the very scheme he was impeached for. They know he will never admit he did anything wrong, which means without external punishment, he won’t be deterred. But they refused to stand up for the impeachment process, refused to admit that the conduct in question really was worthy of serious investigation, even if they didn’t want to remove Trump in the end. Democrats pushing impeachment were relentlessly attacked by right-wing media, and the elected Republicans officials who knew, actually, that the pro-impeachment crowd might have a point said nothing.

They let the impeachment become a purely partisan affair — with the exception of Minnesota’s Rep. Justin Amash, who left the Republican Party because of Trump — and then they blamed the Democrats for not convincing them to join in. Now they say impeachment is too strong a cure for the malady at issue, but they propose no other treatment. They will, undoubtedly, allow Trump to continue thinking that he did nothing wrong and will give him no reason to change his path.

These are clear signs of cowardice and guilt. Not of Trump’s guilt, this time, but their own. They offer their excuses for refusing to challenge Trump, but these paper-thin explanations fail to grapple with the facts and show the lawmakers are lying to themselves. They’re lying to themselves, of course, because they have to. The costs of breaking with the president are far too high — even for Alexander, at the end of his career — and they don’t have the courage to do it.

# The Update on February 6, 2020

By Martin Hittelman

## Senate Republicans Vote to Not Convict Trump

After the House of Representatives voted 232 to 196 to impeach President Trump, the Senate vote to not convict him. The House Democrats voted to impeach with only three Democrats (Peterson, Van Drew, and Golden) voting not to impeach and Gibbard voting present. The Senate vote was 48-52 on abuse of power and 47-53 on obstruction. Mitt Romney was the only Republican to vote to convict. Earlier the Senate voted 49-51 to hear witnesses with only Republicans Romney and Collins willing to call witnesses.

## Mueller Report

The Mueller Report cited a list of possible reasons to impeach Trump. The Democrats only chose two - Trump abused his office in the Ukraine affair and didn't cooperate with subpoenas to provide witnesses and documents.

The Mueller Report cited ten items that could have been used as reasons to impeach. It revealed the Trump Regime culture of lying and cover ups. It provided evidence that the President ordered his federal government to lie and to carry out dubious and unethical acts. Trump also attempted to obstruct justice by interfering in former FBI Director James Comey’s investigations into the Trump campaign’s potential ties to Russia. He then asked for Comey’s complete loyalty and asked Comey inappropriate questions about the investigation. In addition, Trump openly admitted to NBC News’ Lester Holt that he fired Comey because he was unhappy that the Russia investigation continued.

Trump refused to divest from his businesses which continue to line his pockets. His refusal is a clear violation of the Domestic Emoluments clause and the Foreign Emoluments Clause of the Constitution, which prevent the president from receiving payments from state or foreign governments due to the conflicts of interest those payments create.

The House Democrats failed to include the full list of possible impeachment articles for political reasons. They thought the public would get confused if too many issues were raised.

It remains to be seen what the political results will flow from the days and days of public testimony, the party line votes, and the refusal of the Republicans to hear witnesses in the Senate.

## Iowa Caucus

The Iowa Caucus turned out to be a mess. Not all of the caucus sites seemed to have followed all the rules with regard to how voting would take place and how votes were counted. A breakdown of the app used and the **flooding of the Democratic state office phone lines by Trump supporters** led to very late public returns. Although it is clear the Sander and Buttigieg were essentially tied (with 97% of the vote in, both were listed as having 11 delegates and Warren receiving 5), **the press wanted to call a winner**. It may turn out that Buttigieg receives a couple more state delegate equivalents (SDEs) and Sanders receives the most first and final vote totals. This happens due to the fact that some smaller get caucus get more proportional PDEs for the same total vote.

In **the initial preference results** (the raw vote totals at the first stage of the caucus):

Sanders 43,671

Buttigieg 37,557

Warren 32,533

Biden 26,384

Klobuchar 22,469

**In the reallocated preferences** (raw votes after shifting)

Sanders 45,826

Buttigieg 43,195

Warren 34,771

Biden 23,691

Klobuchar 21,181

**State Delegate Equivalents**

Buttigieg 26.2%

Sanders 26.1%

Warren 18%

Biden 15.8%

Klobuchar 12.3%

In any case, the total 41 Democratic convention delegates from Iowa have not yet been totally allocated. Iowa represents about 1% of the total convention delegates. Biden may or may not get even one delegate from Iowa.

ABC News has reported the national **Super Delegate Count** (elected officials and other important people who will vote beginning in the second round of voting who have stated their preference) at this point is:

Biden 68

Sanders 21

Warren 20

Buttigieg 11

Others 24