

## The Republican case against Biden takes a body blow ... from Fox News



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There are two central arguments in the Republican effort to impeach President Biden, neither validated.

The first is that [Joe Biden](#) benefited financially from his son Hunter's business efforts — that Hunter Biden's leveraging of his last name to generate consulting contracts trickled up to his father. Investigations by House Republicans, particularly the Oversight Committee led by Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.) have failed to show any such connection, despite months of looking. Instead, this assertion relies on insinuations about Joe Biden making phone calls to his son — and depends on [ignoring exculpatory evidence](#) from Hunter Biden's former business partner.

The other central attack on the president involves Hunter Biden's work for the Ukrainian energy company Burisma. This relationship was adjudicated robustly during the first impeachment of President [Donald Trump](#), a probe that centered on Trump's desire to have the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, announce an investigation into the Bidens before the 2020 election.

Trumpworld's belief that Joe Biden had sought the ouster of Ukraine's prosecutor general, Viktor Shokin, to benefit Burisma and Hunter Biden was debunked in 2019. Perhaps in part because Fox News [did its best to ignore](#) the evidence in that [impeachment inquiry](#), claims about the now-president trying to get Shokin fired back in 2015 and 2016 have been elevated again as though they retain validity.

They don't — as Fox News unintentionally made clear over the weekend.

Last month, the network interviewed Shokin, during which he once again claimed that his firing was solely a function of then-Vice President Biden pressuring then-Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in defense of Burisma. Given what's [known about the situation](#) — that Shokin failed to target corruption in the country, that there was a resulting [multinational push](#) for his ouster, that there was no active probe into Burisma (and, in fact, that he'd shielded the company) — these were [noncredible claims](#) coming from a noncredible actor.

Fox News host Brian Kilmeade's interview with Poroshenko on Sunday, shared on social media by journalist Aaron Rupar, highlighted that challenge.

Kilmeade began by speaking with the former Ukrainian president — defeated by Zelensky in the country's 2019 election — about the war in Russia. He then transitioned to the interview with Shokin, who'd referred to Poroshenko as his friend.

He played a clip from the Shokin interview in which the former prosecutor claimed that “Poroshenko fired me at the insistence of the then-vice-president Biden because I was investigating Burisma. ... There were no complaints whatsoever, no problems with how I was performing at my job. But because pressure was repeatedly put on President Poroshenko, that is what ended up in him firing me.”

This is patently untrue, as has been established repeatedly. But Kilmeade presented it to Poroshenko as possible, asking if that is, in fact, why Shokin was fired.

“First of all, this is the completely crazy person,” Poroshenko began. “This is something wrong with him.”

“Second,” the nonnative English speaker continued, “there is no one single word of truth. And third, I hate the idea to make any comments and to make any intervention in the American election.” He asked that Kilmeade “not use such person like Shokin to undermine the trust between bipartisan support and Ukraine.”

“He's not your friend?” Kilmeade asked.

“I don't see him — maybe four years or something,” Poroshenko replied. “At all. And I hate the idea to have him because he play very dirty game, unfortunately.”

“Okay, so that is not true,” Kilmeade continued. “He didn’t get fired because of Joe Biden.” Poroshenko confirmed that he did not, saying that Shokin was fired “for his own statement.”

This isn’t news, as such. It’s been known for some time that there was no Burisma probe, that Shokin was seen as too lenient on corruption and that it wasn’t simply Biden who was pressuring Poroshenko to remove him. There were protests in the streets and resignations from within Shokin’s office that contributed to the pressure at stake. Once Trump was president, though, Shokin found sympathetic ears in the Republican’s orbit and convinced both right-wing writers and Trump himself that his ouster was a function of Democratic maneuvering.

The news here is that Fox, which has been an essential platform for every unfounded allegation from Comer and his allies, accidentally stepped on its own messaging. Sure, Poroshenko is not the most reliable narrator himself. But his disparagement of the credibility of Shokin joins a hefty amount of other evidence on the lower side of a lopsided scale.

One should not assume that Fox News and its guests will now transition into skepticism about Shokin’s claims. They are too heavily invested in the idea that Biden’s withholding of a loan guarantee as an American manifestation of the international effort was, instead, proof-positive of Biden’s corruption. The channel ran countless segments on a baseless bribery allegation — that itself centers on Biden’s relationship to Burisma. Fox News and House Republicans will either ignore Poroshenko (as they ignored Hunter Biden’s business partner’s testimony that Joe Biden wasn’t involved in their business) or they will treat Poroshenko as less reliable than Shokin.

This is the problem with the narrative constructed by right-wing elites and media: it’s too far down the path for all of them to admit that they were wrong. They just now have to figure out how they were right in some other way.

Luckily for them, they’re very practiced at such transitions.