



CONGRESS

Republicans break with Trump and Rand Paul on whistleblower unmasking

"We should follow the law. And I believe the law protects whistleblowers."



By **BURGESS EVERETT** and **MARIANNE LEVINE**

11/05/2019 12:48 PM EST

Updated: 11/05/2019 05:52 PM EST



Standing beside President Donald Trump on Monday night, Sen. Rand Paul called for the media to unmask the Ukraine whistleblower and was cheered by rallygoers in Kentucky.

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue approving, you accept our use of cookies. You can view our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.



Story Continued Below

AD

On Tuesday, the Kentucky Republican went a step further, threatening to reveal the name himself.

But many of Paul's colleagues oppose the idea of exposing the identity of the person who helped launch the impeachment drive by detailing Trump's call with the Ukrainian president.

Senior Senate Republicans are worried about the precedent it would set, fearing government sources would be less likely to reveal wrongdoing in future presidencies.

They also have a simpler concern: not breaking the law.

"We should follow the law. And I believe the law protects whistleblowers," said Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.).

"The whistleblower statute is there for a reason. And I think we need to respect the law where whistleblowers are concerned. Eventually that person may decide to come forward voluntarily," said Senate Majority Whip John Thune (R-S.D.), who added that senators like Paul are frustrated with the lack of transparency from the House

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our Use of Cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use. [Accept](#) 

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) said officials “ought to respect the whistleblower laws,” as did Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.). Several senators cited the work of Chuck Grassley, the most senior Senate Republican, who has made whistleblower protections a signature issue.

On Tuesday the Iowa Republican reiterated his stance. “All I can say is I expect whistleblowers to be protected according to what the law gives them,” Grassley said.

“I write whistleblower laws. I got to go by what the law says, and things of that nature so I made my position pretty clear,” he added. “And journalists will have to do what journalists do.”



Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) also expressed his support for the whistleblower.

“Whistleblowers should be entitled to confidentiality and privacy, because they play a vital function in our democracy,” Romney said.

But Paul told reporters Tuesday he is “more than willing to and probably will at some point” name the whistleblower.

Please give us the best possible experience, and we'll use cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more. [Accept](#) ✕

Story Continued Below

AD

"There is no law preventing anybody from saying the name whether you're in the media or you're an elected official," he said.

Sergio Gor, a spokesman for Paul, added: "The whistleblower statute protects the accuser from being fired but says nothing about skeptics revealing his name. There is absolutely no statute that prevents anyone, other than the inspector general, from releasing the accuser's name."

Not everyone is breaking with Paul, a libertarian-leaning Republican whose positions are often at odds with his colleagues.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), who is also tight with Trump, said the public should "absolutely" know the whistleblower's identity and argued the whistleblower statute is being "terribly abused."

"I don't think the president of the United States needs to be impeached based on an anonymous complaint," Graham said. "There is no substitute for us knowing who the whistleblower is. What connections does he have to other people? What are the biases, if any? You cannot do this without the whistleblower being cross-examined."

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more.

Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said Tuesday that whistleblowers should be able to come forward but added — in an echo of Trump and his allies — “people ought to be able to face their accusers.”

Andrew Bakaj, an attorney for the whistleblower, tweeted guidance for members of Congress to not expose his client's identity.

"If Congress and others do not protect my client's anonymity — which my client is afforded to by law — not only does it jeopardize their safety, but it jeopardizes an entire system that took decades to build. It will destroy effective congressional oversight for years to come," Bakaj said.

The president has aimed sustained attacks on the whistleblower and several conservative media outlets have speculated on the person's identity, leading Paul to call for more mainstream outlets to join the effort. Trump himself has encouraged the media to reveal the whistleblower's identity.

In such a politically charged atmosphere, several GOP senators declined to answer the questions. Others said the whistleblower complaint has been overtaken by other events.

“It's kind of a moot issue. ... People can read the transcript themselves,” said Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas).

“He's already been outed. I think we all know who it is,” said Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) cryptically.

Story Continued Below

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.

Accept



AD

The Senate Intelligence Committee is also interested in the whistleblower, according to Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), a member of the committee.

Blunt said he did not share Paul's view that the whistleblower's identity should be made public “but it's also not my view that the whistleblower should be able to answer questions anonymously.”

“The whistleblower should come and answer questions for the Intel Committee,” Blunt said.

POLITICO NEWSLETTERS

Huddle

A daily play-by-play of congressional news in your inbox.

YOUR EMAIL

SIGN UP

By signing up you agree to receive email newsletters or alerts from POLITICO. You can unsubscribe at any time. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

A spokeswoman for Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) confirmed Burr wants to interview the whistleblower.

Even as Republicans debated the notion of unmasking a confidential government source protected by whistleblower law, a new litmus test was already emerging for the party.

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue already, you agree to our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.

Accept



On Monday, Paul tweeted that both the whistleblower and Hunter Biden should be subpoenaed by Congress — leading to a new round of questions for members of the GOP.

Cornyn said the former vice president’s son could be called to testify “if there’s legitimate legislative interest in doing so.”

"Otherwise I wouldn’t do it,” he said.

James Arkin contributed to this report.

FILED UNDER: LAMAR ALEXANDER, MITT ROMNEY, CHUCK GRASSLEY, ROB PORTMAN, 

SHOW COMMENTS

SPONSORED CONTENT

The Net Worth Of Every 2020 Presidential

Forbes

[Pics] Look Closer, These Airport Photos

Ice Pop

The Richest Person In Every State 2019

Forbes

She hasn’t been allowed to do these 50 things

Marie Claire

[Pics] The Giant Bloopers Everyone Missed

Ice Pop

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.

Accept



By |

35 Things Vanishing Because

Ice Pop

How people in other countries spot American

ALOT Travel

[Photos] World's Deadliest Special Forces

Ice Pop

[Pics] Mom Spots Movement Inside \$2

Cleverst

Here Is What New Dental Implants Might

Dental Implants | Sponsored Listings

[About Us](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Breaking News Alerts](#)

[Careers](#)

[Credit Card Payments](#)

[Digital Edition](#)

[FAQ](#)

[Feedback](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Photos](#)

[POWERJobs](#)

[Press](#)

[Print Subscriptions](#)

[Write For Us](#)

[RSS](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Terms of Service](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

To give you the best possible experience, this [site uses cookies](#). If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.

Accept



© 2019 POLITICO LLC

To give you the best possible experience, this site uses cookies. If you continue browsing, you accept our use of cookies. You can review our privacy policy to find out more about the cookies we use.

Accept

