



OPINION | Editorial *This editorial reflects the opinion of this publication's Editorial Board.*

USA TODAY's Editorial Board: Impeach President Trump

The president's Ukraine shakedown and stonewalling are too serious for the House to ignore: Our view

The Editorial Board USA TODAY

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"Put your own narrow interests ahead of the nation's, flout the law, violate the trust given to you by the American people and recklessly disregard the oath of office, and you risk losing your job."

USA TODAY's Editorial Board wrote those words two decades ago when it endorsed the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. Now, in graver circumstances with America's system of checks and balances at stake, they apply to another president facing impeachment, Republican Donald Trump.

The current board has made no secret of our low regard for Trump's character and conduct. Yet, as fellow passengers on the ship of state, we had hoped the captain would succeed. And, until recently, we believed that impeachment proceedings would be healthier for an already polarized nation than simply leaving Trump's fate up to voters next November.

Trump leaves Democrats little choice

Unless public sentiment shifts sharply in the days and weeks ahead, that is the likely outcome of this process — impeachment by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives followed by acquittal in the GOP-controlled Senate. So why bother? Because Trump's egregious transgressions and stonewalling have given the House little choice but to press ahead with the most severe sanction at its disposal.

Clinton was impeached by the House (but not removed by the Senate) after he tried to cover up an affair with a White House intern. Trump used your tax dollars to shake down a vulnerable foreign government to interfere in a U.S. election for his personal benefit.

GOP LEADER ON HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE: Articles establish nothing impeachable and allege no crime

In his thuggish effort to trade American arms for foreign dirt on former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter, Trump resembles not so much Clinton as he does Richard Nixon, another corrupt president who tried to cheat his way to reelection.

This isn't partisan politics as usual. It is precisely the type of misconduct the framers had in mind when they wrote impeachment into the Constitution. Alexander Hamilton supported a robust presidency but

worried about “a man unprincipled in private life desperate in his fortune, bold in his temper” coming to power. Impeachment, Hamilton wrote, was a mechanism to protect the nation “from the abuse or violation of some public trust.”

Approve articles of impeachment

Both articles of impeachment drafted by the House Judiciary Committee warrant approval:

► **Abuse of power.** Testimony before the House Intelligence Committee produced overwhelming evidence that Trump wanted Ukraine’s new president to announce investigations into the Bidens and a debunked theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.

To pressure the Ukrainian leader, Trump withheld a White House meeting and nearly \$400 million in congressionally approved security aid, funding that was released only after an unnamed official blew the whistle.

To former national security adviser John Bolton, the months-long scheme was the equivalent of a “drug deal.” To Bolton’s former aide Fiona Hill, it was a “domestic political errand” that “is all going to blow up.” To Bill Taylor, the top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine, “it’s crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign.” And to Ukrainian soldiers, fighting to fend off Russian aggression in the eastern part of their country, the money was a matter of life and death.

► **Obstruction of Congress.** Trump has met the impeachment investigation with outright and unprecedented defiance. The White House has withheld documents, ordered executive branch agencies not to comply with subpoenas and directed administration officials not to testify.

Allowing this obstruction to stand unchallenged would put the president above the law and permanently damage Congress’ ability to investigate misconduct by presidents of either party.

The president’s GOP enablers continue to place power and party ahead of truth and country. Had any Democratic president behaved the way Trump has — paying hush money to a porn star, flattering dictators and spewing an unending stream of falsehoods — there’s no doubt congressional Republicans would have tried to run him out of the White House in a New York minute. Twenty-seven Republicans who voted to impeach or convict Clinton remain in Congress. If they continue to defend Trump, history will record their hypocrisy.

Our support for Trump’s impeachment by the House — we’ll wait for the Senate trial to render a verdict on removal from office — has nothing to do with policy differences. We have had profound disagreements with the president on a host of issues, led by his reckless deficits and inattention to climate change, both of which will burden generations to come.

Policy differences are not, however, grounds for impeachment. Constitutional violations are.

Bill Clinton should be impeached and stand trial “because the charges are too serious and the evidence amassed too compelling” to ignore, the Editorial Board wrote in December 1998.

The same can be said this December about the allegations facing Donald Trump. Only much more so.

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