

● **BREAKING** PRUDENTIAL TOWER'S TOP OF THE HUB, SKYWALK TO CLOSE

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EDITORIAL

Impeach the president

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The House Intelligence report makes a clear case for impeaching President Trump. ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

From the founding of this country, the power of the president was understood to have limits. Indeed, the Founders would never have written an impeachment clause into the Constitution if they did not foresee scenarios where their descendants might need to remove an elected president before the end of his term in order to protect the American people and the nation.

The question before the country now is whether President Trump's misconduct is severe enough that Congress should exercise that impeachment power, less than a year before the

2020 election. The [results of the House Intelligence Committee inquiry](#), released to the public on Tuesday, make clear that the answer is an urgent yes. Not only has the president abused his power by trying to extort a foreign country to meddle in US politics, but he also has endangered the integrity of the election itself. He has also obstructed the congressional investigation into his conduct, a precedent that will lead to a permanent diminution of congressional power if allowed to stand.

The evidence that Trump is a threat to the constitutional system is more than sufficient, and a slate of [legal scholars who testified](#) on Wednesday made clear that Trump's actions are just the sort of presidential behavior the Founders had in mind when they devised the recourse of impeachment. The decision by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to proceed with drafting articles of impeachment is warranted.

Much of the information in the Intelligence Committee report, which was based on witness interviews, documents, telephone records, and public statements by administration officials, was already known to the public. The cohesive narrative that emerges, though, is worse than the sum of its parts. This year, the president and subordinates acting at his behest repeatedly tried to pressure a foreign country, Ukraine, into taking steps to help the president's reelection. That was, by itself, an outrageous betrayal: In his dealings with foreign states, the president has an obligation to represent America's interests, not his own.

But the president also betrayed the US taxpayer to advance that corrupt agenda. In order to pressure Ukraine into acceding to his request, Trump's administration held up \$391 million in aid allocated by Congress. In other words, he demanded a bribe in the form of political favors in exchange for an official act — the textbook definition of corruption. The fact that the money was ultimately paid, after a whistle-blower complained, is immaterial: The act of withholding taxpayer money to support a personal political goal was an impermissible abuse of the president's power.

Withholding the money also sabotaged American foreign policy. The United States provides military aid to Ukraine to protect the country from Russian aggression. Ensuring that fragile young democracy does not fall under Moscow's sway is a key US policy goal, and one that the president put at risk for his personal benefit. He has shown the world that he is willing to

corrupt the American policy agenda for purposes of political gain, which will cast suspicion on the motivations of the United States abroad if Congress does not act.

To top off his misconduct, after Congress got wind of the scheme and started the impeachment inquiry, the Trump administration refused to comply with subpoenas, instructed witnesses not to testify, and intimidated witnesses who did. That ought to form the basis of an article of impeachment. When the president obstructs justice and fails to respect the power of Congress, it strikes at the heart of the separation of powers and will hobble future oversight of presidents of all parties.

Impeachment does not require a crime. The Constitution entrusts Congress with the impeachment power in order to protect Americans from a president who is betraying their interests. And it is very much in Americans' interests to maintain checks and balances in the federal government; to have a foreign policy that the world can trust is based on our national interest instead of the president's personal needs; to control federal spending through their elected representatives; to vote in fair elections untainted by foreign interference. For generations, Americans have enjoyed those privileges. What's at stake now is whether we will keep them. The facts show that the president has threatened this country's core values and the integrity of our democracy. Congress now has a duty to future generations to impeach him.

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