

October 10, 2019

Statement from co-founders and additional members of Checks & Balances:

In the past several weeks, it has become clear to any observer of current events that the president is abusing the office of the presidency for personal political objectives. Although new facts are being revealed on a daily basis, the following are undisputed, to date:

- In a July 25, 2019, telephone call with the president of Ukraine – a summary of which has been released by the White House – the president requested “a favor” in the context of a discussion of Ukrainian security matters. Specifically, immediately after President Zelensky thanked the president “in the area of defense” and indicated a readiness to buy additional armaments consistent with a U.S. defense proposal, President Trump asked for “a favor.” The favor was to investigate a baseless theory relating to the 2016 investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. election. The U.S. president further requested that the Ukrainian president coordinate the requested investigation with both his personal attorney and the Attorney General of the United States, presenting both a blurring of lines between personal legal representation and official U.S. government business, and, the appearance of inappropriate politicization of the Office of the Attorney General. He then requested, additionally, that the Ukrainian government look into allegations relating to his Democratic presidential opponent, Joe Biden, saying “There's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do with the Attorney General would be great.”
- Between July and September 2019, the Acting Ambassador to Ukraine, Bill Taylor, the (former) State Department Special Envoy to Ukraine, Kurt Volker, and the Ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, exchanged a series of telephone calls and text messages revealing that U.S. diplomats were involved in negotiating an exchange involving a White House meeting and foreign aid on one hand, and a Ukrainian investigation into a meritless allegation involving former Vice President Joe Biden, on the other hand. The text messages reveal that U.S. diplomats were seeking from President Zelensky an assurance that “he will help [the] investigation” while concurrently negotiating a “visit to Washington” and “security assistance.” These circumstances led career Ambassador Taylor to communicate that in his judgment it was “crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign.” These facts are derived from text messages provided to the House of Representatives in connection with the deposition of former Special Envoy Volker and have been released publicly.
- On October 3, 2019, the president stood in front of U.S. press cameras outside the White House and said, “China should start an investigation into the Bidens because what happened in China is just about as bad as what happened with Ukraine.” The president’s statement was broadcast widely.

A president takes the following oath of office:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

We believe the acts revealed publicly over the past several weeks are fundamentally incompatible with the president's oath of office, his duties as commander in chief, and his constitutional obligation to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." These acts, based on what has been revealed to date, are a legitimate basis for an expeditious impeachment investigation, vote in the House of Representatives and potential trial in the Senate. Additional evidence that was detailed in the Special Counsel's Report, related matters of foreign emoluments, and persistent obstructive activities should also inform these proceedings. In addition, given that some of the critical facts under consideration by the Congress have been facilitated by a complaint presented to the Inspector General of the U.S. Intelligence Community, any efforts by U.S. government personnel to inappropriately pressure, intimidate or expose the whistleblower or future whistleblowers who follow the procedures provided by law are contrary to the norms of a society that adheres to the rule of law.

As we said in an April 2019 statement, "free and fair elections, without foreign interference, are at the heart of a healthy democracy." The Special Counsel's report revealed, among other things, that the Trump 2016 campaign was open to and enthusiastic about receiving Russian government-facilitated assistance to gain an advantage in the previous election. The report was not only an exposition, it was a warning. The present circumstances are materially worse: we have not just a political candidate open to receiving foreign assistance to better his chances at winning an election, but a current president openly and privately calling on foreign governments to actively interfere in the most sacred of U.S. democratic processes, our elections. These activities, which are factually undisputed, undermine the integrity of our elections, endanger global U.S. security and defense partnerships, and threaten our democracy.

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