

Bill Kaplan: Impeaching Trump

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All U.S. presidents swear to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States”. However, Nixon infamously said: “Well, when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal”. But Trump has ‘trumped’ Nixon: (The Constitution) “allows me to do whatever I want”. And, Trump has disregarded President George Washington’s prescient warning: “(T)he jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government.”

In June, Trump told ABC’s George Stephanopoulos that he would accept “opportunity research” from a foreign power on his Democratic presidential challenger. He backtracked a bit after a public outcry and said: “I’d report it to the attorney general, the FBI.” Trump was normalizing deception. However, the press uncovered bombshells. Trump solicited Ukraine’s new president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to interfere in the U.S. 2020 presidential election. The conservative Wall Street Journal headline blared: “Trump Repeatedly Pressed Ukraine President to Investigate Biden’s Son (and Biden)”. Moreover, the press revealed that Trump’s private lawyer, Rudolph Giuliani, was a central participant in the scheme to dig up dirt on Joe Biden.

At the same time that the press was exposing Trump’s call to Zelensky there was another revelation. A government whistleblower had gotten wind of the call and filed a formal complaint in August which was quickly buried (like the transcript of the telephone call). A near-unanimous Congress forced Trump to release both. The telephone transcript has Trump pressuring the Ukrainian leader on smearing Joe Biden and his son, who had been on the board of a Ukrainian energy company. There is absolutely no evidence of anything improper by either Biden or his son. The whistleblower complaint raised the same issue: “The President of the United States is using the power of his office to solicit to solicit interference from a foreign country (Ukraine) in the 2020 U.S. election.”

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The fallout was explosive. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi authorized an impeachment inquiry to get all the facts and hold Trump “accountable”. Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin and Democratic Representative Ron Kind also spoke up, while continuing to exercise restraint and thoughtfulness. Baldwin said: “Now we know President Trump solicited interference in our 2020 election. This is a threat to our national security and democracy.” Kind said: “As a former special prosecutor, I know no one is above the law – not even the president.”

But Wisconsin GOP members of Congress have not been forthright. Representative Jim Sensenbrenner gave Trump a pass, saying there was no “quid pro quo” by Trump to the president of Ukraine. However, Trump dangled the promise of a White House visit by Zelensky and prior to the call Trump stopped the flow of nearly \$400 million military-security aid to Ukraine. And, Senator Ron Johnson is in Trump’s hip pocket. But, does Representative Mike Gallagher think Trump is fit to be Commander-in-Chief?

Trump put his personal and political interests above the nation’s. And, he tried to cover it up. Hence, an impeachment inquiry.

–Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 – 2009.