

WHITE HOUSE CRIMINAL

Ukraine scandal sheds light on Trump's corrupt presidency

Last month, the American people learned that President Donald Trump made a phone call in July to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky in an attempt to obtain damaging information on former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading candidate for the 2020 Democratic primary. Not only was Trump's attempt ineffective, it was also an unethical method of political gain that has since led to an impeachment inquiry led by Democrats in the House of Representatives. Trump is finally being held accountable for his actions, and the future of his presidency is now in jeopardy.

When I was doing my homework on Tuesday, Sept. 24, I got an urgent alert on my phone from



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CNN to tune in to their live broadcast of a press conference being held by Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Perplexed, I listened to a brief broadcast in which Pelosi announced that the House would be pursuing an impeachment inquiry against Trump, and I was ecstatic to see that I had so many allies within Congress.

When Trump took his presidential oath of office, he stated, as all presidents have, that he would "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States;" however, Trump has done the exact opposite of that by cheating the American democratic system.

AP Government teacher Tim Beishir said that the Constitution states the causes for impeachment as "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." Because of this unclear wording, the New York Times reports that Congress is currently debating whether Trump's actions fit the impeachment clause or not.

"Impeachment is a political act," Beishir said. "The Constitution's [impeachment clause] is super vague [and] has been used in history as a political tool. Ultimately, it's a vote for politicians and not a criminal trial, even though they call it a trial."

The reason the Ukraine phone call has raised red flags is because Trump asked Zelensky to investigate into Biden, his son Hunter Biden and the company Burisma, a



PLAYGROUND POLITICS: American President Donald Trump is not offering military aid to Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky unless he agrees to participate in the investigation of former Vice President Joe Biden. The House of Representatives began an impeachment inquiry against Trump after he asked Zelensky to investigate Biden on Tuesday, Sept. 24. "We are in a full-blown constitutional crisis," said Hal Snyder, a member of the Mount Prospect political group We The People. "The traditional checks and balances which we've regarded as necessary for our democracy are no longer serving to restrain a president who ignores laws and ethics." (cartoon by Mara Nicolai)

Ukraine-based business that Hunter worked for in 2014.

In 2016, top Democrats, many Republican senators and Biden pushed to get Ukrainian prosecutor Viktor Shokin fired because of his inability to cut down on corruption in Ukraine.

However, Trump believes that he did this in an attempt to protect his son because Shokin was investigating Burisma and believed that Hunter may have been involved in wrongdoing, according to CNN.

Although Trump may have been honestly pursuing what he believed to be a crime, the fact of the matter is that he still attempted to use a foreign government to investigate his political opponent. The Washington Post reported that Trump held back military aid in the form of weapons and training from Ukraine as a way to convince Zelensky to participate in an investigation. That is stone-cold bribery and a major justification for his impeachment.

"Not only is this impeachment wise, it's necessary," said Hal Snyder, a member of the Mount Prospect political group We The People. "I don't want to waste my energy thinking about what could've been if [the inquiry] came sooner; I just want us to focus on what's happening now and how we can solve this crisis."

According to NPR, the Trump Administration stated that they will not comply with impeachment proceedings — as if they have a choice. Not only is this a sign of

pure ignorance, it also shows how much disrespect Trump has for the American democracy. This man believes that he gets to decide whether or not he wants to follow the democratic system as if he is above the law.

Senior Ben Sell, a student who worked on the campaign for former Republican governor Bruce Rauner last year, describes Trump's behavior as un-presidential because he does not possess the calm, professional qualities that a president needs.

According to Sell, Trump's reaction to the impeachment inquiry shows his lack of intelligence about the American government. He states that no amount of money or power can save Trump from the law.

"We have the ability to impeach elected officials for a reason," Sell said. "I think it's great that we have [impeachment] built into our system, and regardless of the amount of money you have, you can still be held accountable for your actions."

Even though the Ukraine phone call triggered the impeachment in-

quiry, Trump has had the furthest thing from a clean presidency. According to the Wall Street Journal, Trump approached the director of the FBI in 2017 for a request to curtail the investigation of former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn.

Flynn was under investigation on the belief that he lied to the FBI about a conversation he had with the Russian ambassador in 2016 and was later convicted of a felony charge for this crime. Luckily, the FBI director did not abide by Trump's request and allowed America to see that Trump committed obstruction of justice.

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- Ben Sell, senior

struction of justice is a class four felony in which a person interferes in an ongoing investigation. Although the FBI did not explicitly state that Trump committed this crime, his actions are clear representations of this felony that Congress plans to investigate further.

We have a criminal sitting in the Oval Office who has absolutely no political experience and is under the impression that he can do whatever he wants with the office that he holds. I just cannot help but wonder — if bribery and obstruction of justice are not causes for impeachment, then what is?

The fact that Congress is struggling to justify impeachment is appalling considering that one of two presidents to be impeached, Bill Clinton, was impeached by the House in 1998 for committing perjury to a grand jury and obstruction of justice. Clinton was never removed from office because he was acquitted of all charges by the Senate during his impeachment trial. Not only has Trump committed one of the crimes Clinton was impeached for, he has also com-

mitted a crime specifically stated in the Constitution as a cause for impeachment.

There has only been one moment in American history where a president genuinely faced the possibility of being removed from office, and that was in 1974 when Richard Nixon was facing impeachment charges for his role in the Watergate scandal.

The Watergate scandal was a political conspiracy in which members of the Nixon Administration arranged the bugging of the Watergate hotel, the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee, in order to get information that could help Nixon in the 1972 election.

Carl Bernstein, the legendary journalist that uncovered the Watergate scandal alongside journalist Bob Woodward, told CNN in an interview about the Ukraine scandal that "we're watching a cover-up" because of the conspicuous acts done by the Trump Administration.

Bernstein said this because they attempted to hide the transcript of the Ukraine phone call in a top secret computer and are not cooperating with congressional subpoenas. These are the same offenses that started impeachment proceedings for Nixon, but he avoided a trial after becoming the first and only president to resign on Aug. 9, 1974.

Because Trump is now being held comparable to Nixon, most of America cannot help but support an impeachment of the president. According to a poll done by Fox News, 51% of Americans want Trump impeached and removed from office.

"We are in a full-blown constitutional crisis," Snyder said. "The traditional checks and balances which we've regarded as necessary for our democracy are no longer serving to restrain a president who ignores laws and ethics."

With the scary similarities that this scandal has to Watergate, I hope to see Trump held to justice for his actions. No more bribery or corruption can occur within the executive branch. It is time for our country to take charge and do what must be done: lock up the criminal in the White House and reinstate our democracy. ▶

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