

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery

“The Basis for an Impeachment Inquiry of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.”

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So let's get this straight.

We're 62 hours away from shutting down the government, and Republicans are launching an impeachment drive based on a long-debunked and discredited lie. No foreign enemy has ever been able to shut down the government of the United States of America, but now MAGA Republicans are about to do just that.

But they don't want to cut off public services to the American people and deny paychecks to more than a million service members without first launching an impeachment drive against the President—even when they do not have a shred of evidence against him.

You think I'm being harsh?

Here's what some Republicans have said over the last week about the actions of fellow Republicans, as they watch up close, quote, “the dysfunction caucus at work,” as our GOP colleague from Nebraska, Don Bacon, calls them.

“Clown show;” “Foolishness;” “Terribly misguided;” “Stupidity;” “Failure to lead;” “Lunatics;” “Disgraceful;” “New low;” “Pathetic;” “Enabling Chairman Xi;” “People that have serious issues;” “These folks don't have a plan;” “Showed just how broken they are;” and “individuals that just want to burn the whole place down.”

If I said these things about them, they'd probably take my words down, but these are Republicans speaking about Republicans.

So, to be clear, this is not partisan warfare. It is chaotic infighting between Republicans and Republicans. MAGA versus extreme MAGA—as if anybody in the real world could tell the difference between the two. What a staggering and epic failure of leadership.

Speaker McCarthy's invertebrate appeasement of the most fanatical Members of his conference now threatens the well-being of all Americans. He could have stuck to the budget agreement he made with us back in May. A deal is a deal. He could agree to the bipartisan continuing resolution advancing in the Senate.

But instead, he caves in again to the Republicans and pro-insurrectionists and puts forward a MAGA budget that would ravage our people by slashing billions from programs that help families and children, like SNAP and the WIC program.

Some people think the Members of the GOP Caucus “aren’t interested in anything logical, they just want to watch the world burn,” as Alfred Pennyworth put it in the Dark Knight.

But I perceive a method in the madness.

A week ago, on September 20, Donald Trump posted a comment saying that a government shutdown is, “the last chance to defund these political prosecutions against me and other Patriots.”

Get it? To delay justice, Donald Trump would cut off paychecks to a couple million service members and federal workers, halt food assistance to millions of moms and kids, and keep NIH from enrolling any more patients in life-or-death clinical research trials.

He is convinced that if we just shut down the government of the United States, his four criminal prosecutions on 91 different felony and misdemeanor charges will be defunded and delayed long enough to keep him from having to go before a jury of his peers before the 2024 election.

Then, according to his magical thinking, when he gets seven million Biden voters to switch over to Trump and persuades millions of new young American voters who hate everything he stands for like climate denialism and trampling on women’s rights to vote for him, he can pardon himself and his fellow January 6th defendants for all their crimes and presto!—justice delayed by government shutdown will become justice denied forever for him and he can proceed to jail and execute his opponents as he is promising to do.

Like flying monkeys on a mission for the Wicked Witch of the West, Trump’s followers in the House now carry his messages out to the world: shut down the government! Shut down the prosecutions!

But the cult master has another command for his followers which brings us here today.

On August 27th, he posted his edict: “Either IMPEACH the BUM, or fade into OBLIVION. THEY DID IT TO US!”

Of course, the standard for impeachment is not whether “they did it to us,” but whether the president committed treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.

But the Constitution is irrelevant to the Banana Republicans. What counts is what Trump wants. As Republican Congressman Ken Buck, a Freedom Caucus Member, told CNN: “President Trump has gone on his social media account and said that we should be impeaching President Biden. Kevin McCarthy said we have an impeachment inquiry. You draw the conclusion. [. . .] [D]irectly or indirectly, this impeachment inquiry was a result of President Trump’s pressure.”

So we move from the Trump-ordered government shutdown to the Trump-ordered impeachment process, and yet back in the reality-based world, the Majority sits completely empty-handed with no evidence of any presidential wrongdoing. No smoking gun. No gun. No smoke.

The title of the hearing is “The Basis for an Impeachment Inquiry of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.,” and yet they present us no basis at all today even after eight months of investigation.

They have invited three witnesses to testify. None of them is an eyewitness to a presidential crime. None of them is a direct fact witness about any of the events related to Ukraine and Burisma. None of them has even participated in the eight months of investigation, in which the Chairman has publicly boasted that he has received 100% of everything he asked for, and “Every subpoena that I’ve signed as chairman of the House Oversight Committee over the last five months, we’ve gotten 100% of what we’ve requested. Whether it’s with the FBI or with banks or with Treasury.”

In fact, the Committee has received 12,000 pages of bank records. They are right here in front of us—printed double-sided—and not a single one of these pages shows even a dime going to President Biden.

We have also received 2,000 pages of SARS reports the Chairman subpoenaed, and we have held hearings and conducted interviews with everyone from Hunter Biden's business partners to a federal agent assigned to the Hunter Biden investigation. And still we have found no evidence of wrongdoing by President Biden.

Ladies and gentlemen, if the Republicans had a smoking or even a single damning piece evidence, they would be presenting it today. But they have none.

All they can do is return to the thoroughly demolished lie that Rudy Giuliani and Donald Trump launched nearly five years ago—the ruined Burisma conspiracy theory, a fairy tale so preposterous that even one of its main authors has repudiated it.

This is the theory that Vice President Biden, global anti-corruption groups, and most Western governments, targeted Ukraine prosecutor general Viktor Shokin for removal because he was threatening the Burisma corporation whose board Hunter Biden served on. Trump synthesized the lie in his August 27th post about President Biden, saying, "Look, the guy got bribed, he paid people off, and he wouldn't give One Billion Dollars to Ukraine unless they 'got rid of the Prosecutor.'"

Trump's story is the direct opposite of the truth. When Joe Biden was Vice President, he worked as a key player in the Obama Administration and global community's efforts to combat corruption in Ukraine.

In late 2015, as part of this coordinated global effort, then-Vice President Biden called for the removal of Viktor Shokin, a profoundly corrupt Ukrainian prosecutor general, who did nothing about political corruption in Ukraine other than participate in it. Rather than assist British authorities who were investigating Burisma and its owner, Shokin consistently foiled their efforts.

The leadership provided by Vice President Biden was part of a broad bipartisan campaign to oppose corruption in Ukraine. In early 2016, Republican Senators Ron Johnson, Rob Portman, and Mark Kirk wrote to Ukraine's President assailing corruption in his country and specifically urging him, "to press ahead with urgent reforms to the Prosecutor General's office and judiciary."

Yet, years later, in 2018, as President Trump saw Joe Biden as a strong rival in the 2020 election, he worked with Giuliani to twist all the facts around and to suddenly accuse Biden of corruption in calling for the dismissal of a prosecutor who Trump falsely claimed was prosecuting Burisma.

A few months ago, Chairman Comer and the Committee received an insider's account of the plot to concoct and spread this lie from an extraordinary letter sent to us by Lev Parnas, who was Rudy Giuliani's right-hand-man-in-Ukraine.

Giuliani and Parnas searched high and low to find people who would endorse their contortions about Joe Biden. Their failing crusade culminated in the infamous phone call that then-President Trump made to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in which Trump threatened to withhold hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid to Ukraine unless Zelensky embraced their ridiculous fabrication and falsely advertised to the world that Ukraine was investigating Joe Biden.

This shakedown became the basis for the first House impeachment of President Trump.

Giuliani's Big Lie has been thoroughly debunked. As Congressman Buck, a former chief of the criminal division of the U.S. Attorney's office in Colorado and a member of the House Freedom Caucus recently said,

“There is, in fact, no evidence that Shokin was engaged in an investigation of Burisma, or that Joe Biden’s role in his firing was in any way connected to Burisma.” He continued: “What’s missing, despite years of investigation, is the smoking gun that connects Joe Biden to his ne’er-do-well son’s corruption.”

It is scandalous to use impeachment to establish a counterfeit moral equivalence between President Biden, an honorable public servant who has never been indicted or convicted of anything in his public career of more than 50 years, and Donald Trump, a twice-impeached president who has recently been found to have sexually abused and defamed a woman, and fraudulently inflated the value of his real estate properties while facing 91 criminal charges in four separate indictments on everything from conspiring to overthrow an election and defraud the American people to making criminal hush money payoffs to stealing classified government documents and hiding them while obstructing justice.

Impeachment is the people’s final weapon of constitutional self-defense against a president who acts like a King and violates the essential public trust by committing treason, bribery, or equivalent high crimes and misdemeanors.

It is reserved for extraordinary public offenses like inciting a violent insurrection against the American government and trying to overthrow a presidential election. That particular offense in 2021, whose related crimes have resulted in hundreds of criminal convictions and hundreds more cases that are still being prosecuted, led to Donald Trump’s second impeachment in the House on a massive bipartisan vote of 232-197 and to a similarly lopsided bipartisan vote of 57-43 in the Senate.

I wonder how many of my esteemed Republican colleagues here—who all voted against impeaching Donald Trump—can reconcile their votes against impeaching Donald Trump for the grave crime of inciting a violent insurrection against the government with their calls supporting impeachment of Joe Biden for allegedly committing a high crime and misdemeanor that has not even been defined yet, much less proven.

Republican opposition to the impeachment of Donald Trump for inciting insurrection against our government was a tragedy. Republican support for impeaching Joe Biden for actions unknown and offenses undefined is a farce, and a dangerous one at that.

At a time when we should be working to keep the government open and helping the people of Ukraine beat back Vladimir Putin’s filthy imperialist invasion—complete with mass kidnappings, mass rapes and indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets—Chairman Comer is endorsing President Trump’s renewed calls to withhold funding from Ukraine and has even referred to Ukraine as an “adversary of the United States,” all in the name of recycling Giuliani’s lie.

However, if the dysfunction caucus is intent on going forward without the House floor vote that Speaker McCarthy once insisted was necessary to proceed, then the American people surely deserve to have all the facts, starting with the men who concocted the Burisma theory.

We must receive testimony from Rudy Giuliani and Lev Parnas—the central insiders who know the origins of the lie upon which this sham impeachment is based, and who worked to spread it.

We know Mr. Parnas is ready and willing to testify, and as a former U. S. Attorney and Mayor, Mr. Giuliani will surely agree to enlighten us on everything he knows.

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