

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

Ranking Member Jamie Raskin Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery “Influence Peddling: Examining Joe Biden’s Abuse of Public Office” March 20, 2024

With any luck, today marks the end of perhaps the most spectacular failure in the history of Congressional investigations, the effort to find a high crime or misdemeanor committed by Joe Biden and then to impeach him for it.

In prior hilarious episodes of this long-running madcap series, America got to see the following:

Nearly 20 fact witnesses who could not identify a single act of wrongdoing by President Biden, much less a high crime and misdemeanor, and who overwhelmingly testified that Biden was not involved in any of his family's business ventures.

Three expert witnesses called by the Majority itself who said that nothing they had seen in the tens of thousands of pages of documents produced by the Majority even remotely approached the level of a high crime or misdemeanor.

Bank records that show exactly what all the witnesses told us: Joe Biden was not involved in his family member’s business ventures.

Repeated voyeuristic displays of pornographic images by the Majority completely irrelevant to any conceivable legislative or investigative purpose.

One star witness, Gal Luft, who turned out to be a Chinese agent and an illegal arms trafficker on the run from justice.

And the key piece of evidence which launched the entire zany goose chase, an FD-1023 form in which the FBI duly recorded a completely fictional tip about a \$5 million bribe to Vice President Biden, peddled by Alex Smirnov, who has been criminally indicted by a Trump-appointed U.S. Attorney, Special Counsel David Weiss, for his lies to the FBI and now sits in jail in California as a flight risk while the world studies his extensive and longstanding ties to Russian intelligence.

Today Chairman Comer and his ace MAGA detectives have finally jumped the shark. The comedy of errors comes crashing to an end as House Republicans in more than a dozen Biden districts beg for mercy and the Committee throws a flabby Hail Mary more than a month after the Super Bowl is over. So today we revisit the fruitless testimony of two more fading star witnesses who have failed to testify to any presidential wrongdoing, much less evidence of treason, bribery or high crimes and misdemeanors.

Both are frustrated would-be business partners of Hunter Biden who tried to leverage the Biden name, or “brand” as they call it, but never got any business off the ground for reasons that will become painfully obvious

to anyone watching today. Even Hunter, laboring at the time under a serious substance abuse addiction, could tell these were not the type of people he should be doing business with. So, rather than representing the Biden brand, which was their ardent wish, they now show up today as loyal servants of Trump World, each of them proudly represented by their very own former Trump White House attorney.

The first is Mr. Bobulinski, the bitterly disappointed wannabe Hunter business partner whose famously litigious history includes unsuccessfully suing his own dying father's charity for nearly \$1 million dollars and just last month suing Cassidy Hutchinson for \$10 million after she reported that she saw Bobulinski, wearing a ski mask, meeting with Mark Meadows, which Ms. Hutchinson has now backed up with actual documentary photographic evidence, something in very short supply in this investigation.

Mr. Bobulinski made his hazy allegations against the Bidens public for the first time at a press conference choreographed by the Trump for President campaign, which provided Bobulinski a venue, a gaggle of journalists, and even a dress shirt they purchased for him to wear to the event. Hours later, Bobulinski joined the second 2020 presidential debate as Donald Trump's personal guest, where he was seated with Kid Rock and Mark Meadows, Trump's Chief of Staff.

The other star witness, Mr. Galanis, is a serial fraudster and convicted "con artist"—a term I would not use on a witness except it was explicitly bestowed upon him by not one but two United States federal district judges, including the one who sentenced him to over fifteen years in prison for defrauding union pension funds, a Native American tribe, and scores of innocent investors. Mr. Galanis was sentenced to pay restitution of over \$80 million to his victims. That's a lot of money, that's what Donald Trump was ordered to pay in the E. Jean Carroll case.

The very first record of Galanis' claims against the Biden family appeared in the clemency petition he sent from prison to President Trump asking for help. Mr. Galanis presently has Chairmen Comer and Jordan, and Mr. Biggs writing letters to the Justice Department and Bureau of Prisons to secure his transfer out of prison.

But the key point is this: even if we were to believe every word offered by these utterly compromised witnesses, Mr. Bobulinski and Mr. Galanis, their allegations don't identify any wrongdoing, much less an impeachable offense against the Republic, by President Biden.

Apparently, with the impeachment bus running on empty, our GOP colleagues now plan to save face by ending this farce with criminal referrals. But criminal referrals require evidence of crimes and the only crimes we have seen are those of the Republicans' own star witnesses like Russian asset Alexander Smirnov, Chinese agent Gal Luft, Devon Archer, and Jason Galanis.

The Minority witness today, our witness, Lev Parnas, casts a piercing light on what's place here. And Mr. Parnas has reason to know. He too used to be a MAGA sycophant peddling lies and disinformation to smear Joe Biden. Today he joins a long line of self-exiles from Trump-world who could no longer stomach all the corruption and deceit. People like Cassidy Hutchinson, people like Michael Cohen, Sarah Matthews, Alyssa Griffin, General James Mattis, the chair of the joint chiefs of staff, Mark Mille, General John Kelly, and now Vice President Mike Pence who refused to endorse for president the man who he served with. But we do have loyal sycophants in the room and one day I look forward to hearing their testimony about how they got sunk into this religious cult.

Mr. Parnas wrote Chairman Comer and me a remarkable letter on July 23, 2023. This is the first time I'm meeting him today. He was Rudy Giuliani's right-hand man, his globetrotting business partner and language interpreter in the mission to manufacture Ukraine and Burisma-related dirt and smears against Joe Biden in 2018 and 2019. He spent all of his time traveling around the world trying to stage evidence against Joe Biden. In his letter, Parnas explains that the desperate search to find evidence of any kind of Biden corruption was a complete and total bust because there was nothing to find. He wrote to tell us that not only is there no evidence

in Ukraine that Joe Biden did anything improper, but more darkly, the manic search for a smoking gun against Biden became a mission to invent and concoct evidence out of thin air with the active help of Russian intelligence assets and agents.

A man who has reckoned with his own descent into Trump World, Lev Parnas is of what he did to serve the interests of Russian propaganda and Trump lies; and he wants America to know the truth. Parnas can explain how the Russian-generated conspiracy theories and lies he promoted with Rudy Giuliani live on still in the outrageous fabrications spread by Alexander Smirnov and repeated by this Committee like Pavlov's dog.

At every turn, my Republican colleagues cry "Russia hoax" even in the face of repeated warnings from Donald Trump's own Treasury Secretary and Secretary of State, from the Intelligence Community, from Robert Mueller, and most recently from Special Counsel Weiss. As Secretary Mnuchin stated: "Russian disinformation campaigns targeting American citizens are a threat to our democracy." But my GOP colleagues continue to cry "Russia hoax" like cult members selling flowers at the airport.

Yet my Republican colleagues are the ones repeating and amplifying the actual Russian hoax: the one Giuliani, Trump, and Smirnov have swallowed from Putin and his agents. They participate in this hoax while they shamefully block aid \$60 billion in military assistance to President Zelensky and the besieged Ukrainian people—five years after Trump and Giuliani tried to shake President Zelensky down for phony dirt on Joe Biden. And while they continue to parrot these transparent Russian lies, Vladimir Putin wages a bloody aggressive war on Ukraine filled with atrocities like mass kidnapping of children, rape and slaughter of civilians.

The MAGA Right's wholesale adoption of the Russian hoax and their sellout of the Ukrainian people by the MAGA Right is an historic betrayal of democracy, freedom and the rule of law. But the defense of democracy begins with fidelity to the truth and Oversight Democrats, America's truth squad against this misinformation is here to set the record straight.

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Contact: Nelly Decker, Communications Director, (202) 226-5181