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From: Tom Steyer  
To: Interested Parties  
Regarding: The Political Case for Impeaching Now  
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For two years, members of Congress have wanted to “wait and see” special counsel Robert Mueller’s report before making any decisions about impeachment. Now that Mueller’s report has arrived, and the special counsel is expected to testify before Congress, these members will have to decide if they are going to act on the evidence federal investigators uncovered, or choose to ignore Donald Trump’s crimes.

Mueller’s team [exposed](#) at least 140 contacts between the Kremlin and the Trump team, [netted](#) 199 criminal charges, 37 indictments or guilty pleas, and 5 prison sentences. Their report shows that the president and his team knew about what the Russians were up to; that they asked for, welcomed, and received help from Moscow; and then lied to cover their tracks. They also presented evidence showing that Donald Trump obstructed justice. [Roughly 800](#) former federal prosecutors agree that had Mr. Trump been anyone other than a sitting president, he would be facing multiple felony charges. In short, Mueller’s report is an impeachment referral in everything but name.

Already, almost every House Democrat agrees that Donald Trump participated in “[highly unethical and unscrupulous behavior](#).” House Democrats routinely say he [betrays the Constitution](#) and [attacks our democracy](#); they claim he is [worse than Nixon](#). They already know Mr. Trump’s wrongdoing merits impeachment. And though know that Congress is duty bound to protect the rule of law, many Democrats in the House oppose beginning impeachment hearings to do so. These Democrats insist that impeachment would be too divisive, that Senate Republicans will never vote to remove Donald Trump from office, and there will be a price to pay for impeachment come Election Day.

***Their opposition is based overwhelmingly on political considerations. Not only is that the wrong framework for making this decision, these well-meaning Democrats are coming to the wrong conclusions. Impeachment is not just the right thing to do—it’s politically smart, too.***

### **REPUBLICANS DIDN’T PAY A POLITICAL PRICE FOR IMPEACHING BILL CLINTON**

Opponents to impeachment like to point to the fact that Republicans faced a political backlash for impeaching Bill Clinton, and if Democrats attempt to impeach Mr. Trump today, they will similarly pay a political price. This argument holds no water.

To start with, Republicans did not suffer significant consequences after they impeached President Clinton. In the very next election after impeachment, Republicans maintained their majorities in the House and Senate, and George W. Bush was able to take the presidency by running against the scandal by promising to restore “[honor and dignity to the White House](#).” During that campaign, there was far more pressure from reporters on Al Gore to constantly justify his decision to stand by Bill Clinton than there was on any Republican to justify their support for impeachment.

The analogy between the two also ignores another critical contrast: Bill Clinton was popular and Donald Trump is not. From the release of the Starr Report until Election Day, President Clinton's approval ratings never dropped below [63 percent](#), and it was above 60 for the entirety of the Lewinsky investigation. Donald Trump's average approval ratings, on the other hand, have never risen above [45 percent](#). The political implications of impeaching a popular president will obviously differ from those of impeaching an unpopular one.

In addition, the public viewed President Clinton's purported wrongdoing (lying about an affair) as unrelated to his job and as the culmination of a six-year partisan campaign to destroy his Presidency. The charges against Mr. Trump are far more serious—obstructing an investigation into an attack on the United States.

There is also historical evidence to suggest that impeachment can be politically advantageous. After Nixon (who was also [unpopular](#)) was forced to resign, Democrats picked up [49 seats](#) in the House and [four seats](#) in the Senate. And, Jimmy Carter was later able to win the White House by telling Americans "[we just want the truth again.](#)"

### **IMPEACHMENT HEARINGS CAN FOCUS THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION**

Those who are scared of the politics of impeachment also believe it can't work. If Senate Republicans will never vote to convict Donald Trump, their logic goes, what's the point? They ignore that: (1) the facts favor impeachment; and (2) televised impeachment hearings put a spotlight on Mr. Trump's crimes, which could take control of the political narrative and sway popular opinion.

When the House Judiciary committee [started considering](#) possibly impeaching Nixon hearings, less than [30 percent](#) supported removing Nixon from office. By the time Nixon resigned, [57 percent](#) thought he should be removed from office.

Far more Americans [support Mr. Trump's impeachment right now](#)—and within the last year, we've already seen those numbers rise following televised congressional testimony. After Americans watched Michael Cohen testify under oath before the House Oversight Committee, support of impeachment rose [6 percent](#).

Following the Mueller report's release, [56 percent](#) of Americans now believe Donald Trump or his campaign committed crimes, and [53 percent](#) who had heard of the Special Counsel's report said they thought Mueller's team found evidence that Mr. Trump obstructed justice. Still, the American people do not yet have a full understanding of the crimes, corruption, and coverups that Donald Trump and his inner circle orchestrated. CNN found that [only three percent](#) of Americans said that they have read the entire Mueller report. That suggests we have not reached the ceiling.

Nobody can say with certainty how public opinion will change once impeachment hearings have commenced or how that will affect our elected officials, but if Democrats don't act to take control of the narrative, Mr. Trump will. This investigation involves everything from counter-intelligence and foreign business dealings to campaign finance violations and cover-ups. Instead of relying on evidence coming haphazardly from various committees, impeachment provides Democrats the best opportunity to present this evidence in a coherent, compelling fashion, and more fully control the narrative. The White House will have a far more difficult time spinning if the American people get to see and hear everything over the course of a single, neat process, designed so they can judge for themselves if charges should be adopted.

Impeachment would also put Democrats on a [stronger legal footing](#) to get this evidence out to the people than they would be sticking to a committee process. They'll need it. Mr. Trump has vowed to stonewall "[all](#)" House subpoenas and thwart any congressional investigation. His administration has already [refused](#) to release Mueller's full report. Delaying an impeachment for further unspecified investigations allows Mr. Trump to arrive at the election unsullied and denies Americans access to the evidence Mueller uncovered.

No matter what might happen after an impeachment vote, Americans deserve to know the full truth before they cast their ballots on Election Day.

### **EVEN A FAILED IMPEACHMENT WILL PUT REPUBLICANS ON DEFENSE**

Some argue that if the Senate does not convict Mr. Trump, he will claim vindication and take that as an opening for a victory lap. Knowing everything we do about Mr. Trump, it's obvious that he will falsely claim he's been cleared of wrongdoing either way. In fact, he already is. He's using Attorney General Bill Barr's summary of the Mueller report to claim: "[No Collusion, No Obstruction, Complete and Total EXONERATION.](#)"

Perhaps more important is what would happen if, after the impeachment process establishes ample grounds for Mr. Trump's removal, Senate Republicans stand steadfast by his side. The last two years have shown that there is a political price for protecting this president. Mr. Trump was not on the ballot in 2018, but he might as well have been. By and large, House Democrats ran on a [platform](#) of holding Donald Trump accountable. NBC exit polls showed that [94 percent](#) of Democrats cast their votes in the House elections as a way to express opposition to Donald Trump. We have no reason to doubt voters will continue to hold Republicans accountable if they continue to protect him and excuse blatant corruption. If Senate Republicans want to allow an attack on our democracy, then, they should be forced to do so on the record, and defend that decision for the rest of their careers.

If the House refuses to impeach Mr. Trump, however, he can say that everyone—Democrat and Republican alike—agrees he's innocent. His claim of exoneration will hold no water, however, if it rests on partisans like Mitch McConnell.

### **CONGRESS CANNOT PUT IMPEACHMENT OFF ANY LONGER**

Democrats shouldn't refuse to meet their constitutional responsibility simply because they assume Republicans will do the same. Even if the Senate won't remove Mr. Trump from office, the country cannot afford setting a precedent that that his actions were unimpeachable. Waiting for Republican permission means handing control over to them. That can't work.

We know with absolute certainty that Donald Trump's abuse of power and assault on democracy is not over. If the members of the House of Representatives do not even *try* to begin the effort to remove Mr. Trump from office, each new example of his contempt for the rule of law will raise more questions about *their* decision to allow him to remain in office. And the blame will be shared.

If Americans see Democrats as too scared to act, the party will seem weak. If they think Democrats are prolonging investigations to score political points, they will be seen as cynical and uncaring. But, if voters see Democrats doing their jobs and tackling their constitutional responsibilities without regard to political cost, voters will reward them.

## **DON'T WORRY ABOUT DONALD TRUMP'S BASE**

Donald Trump has always been unpopular with the public at large, but he has always enjoyed strong support among Republicans, and there is no reason to expect that to change—regardless of what Democrats do. Mr. Trump only has one trick: base politics. But he plays it well. Refusing to act out of fear that it might energize a Republican base which will inevitably be energized anyway only risks de-motivating the *Democratic* base.

In 2018, Republican voters turned out to vote despite Trump's unpopularity, a rarity for the president's party in midterm elections. Republicans turned out 11 million more Republican votes in [2018](#) than in [2014](#), when Republicans *gained 13 seats* in the House. In 2018, Democrats gained [40 seats](#), not because Republicans stayed home, but because of massive turnout by Democrats. Nor has energetic Republican support for Mr. Trump lagged due to the GOP's 2018 losses: [89 percent](#) of Republicans currently approve of the job Donald Trump is doing, and [the interest his voters have](#) in the 2020 campaign has already reached levels typically seen only weeks before Election Day. The lesson is simple: even an unpopular Donald Trump will enjoy strong support and high turnout among Republican voters.

For Democrats to win in 2020, they must sustain historic turnout increases among Democratic voters. In [2018](#), Democrats turned out 25 million more votes than they did in [2014](#), while Republicans only managed 11 million more. That's roughly a 60 percent increase for Democrats.

Research conducted by the Analyst Institute shows that GOTV efforts are far more effective at winning elections than current persuasion tactics typically employed by campaigns. Focusing on energizing the Democratic base, then, will be key to victory—and House Democrats can help that effort by impeaching Mr. Trump. About [70 percent](#) of Democratic voters favor impeachment. CNN found that [71 percent](#) of Democrats and Democratic leaning independent voters thought it was very or somewhat important that the Democratic candidate for president supports impeachment. Holding Donald Trump accountable could therefore boost Democratic turnout.

House Democrats know voters are fed up with Washington corruption. If Democrats stand down in the face of Mr. Trump's clear abuse of power, they risk looking like they put politics ahead of cleaning up Washington. Opposition to Mr. Trump inspired millions to march, protest, to run for office. The activists, volunteers, and Democratic voters who delivered a House majority want to see their party standing up to Donald Trump. We shouldn't let them down.

## **IMPEACHMENT WILL NOT TURN OFF INDEPENDENT VOTERS**

There's a debate within the party about how to replicate those numbers next year. Party leadership side argues that Democrats must focus on flipping independents and "moderates." But [there are fewer swing voters than ever before](#). Electoral success relies less and less on persuading voters and more and more on turning out voters who agree with you.

Josh Kalla of Berkely and David Broockman from Stanford [found](#) that for persuasion to work, it needs to be done far in advance of an election, and either present new information or information that reinforces voters' existing beliefs. These conclusions offer additional reasons to pursue impeachment.

First, we have more than 18 months until election day, and [75 percent](#) of Americans have not read *any* of the redacted Mueller report. Second, independent voters already have a strong aversion to Donald Trump ([41-25](#)). Polling shows they find him [dishonest and arrogant](#). Even before the Mueller report came out, [60 percent](#) of

independent voters believe that Mr. Trump committed crimes before he was president, and a plurality thought he committed crimes while in office.

Again, a comparison to 1998 is useful: Throughout the Lewinsky investigation, Bill Clinton's Gallup approval ratings *among independents* was comfortably in the [60s](#). Mr. Trump's Gallup approval among independents have been in the [30s](#) throughout his presidency.

The electoral importance of independent voters is frequently overstated, but insofar as their concerns are a priority, Democrats should understand that they strongly dislike the president. Proving Mr. Trump is a criminal will only reinforce what they already believe.

### **DON'T WORRY ABOUT CURRENT POLLING**

Those who are skeptical of impeachment argue that there isn't enough public support to begin hearings. They point out that only [45 percent](#) support impeaching Donald Trump.

In 2018, millions of Americans turned out to give Congress a mandate to hold Donald Trump accountable. CNN's exit poll showed that [92 percent](#) of Democrats supported impeaching Mr. Trump on election day. Since that time, support for impeachment has run up against opposition from Democratic leadership. In March, Nancy Pelosi famously said that impeaching Mr. Trump is "[just not worth it](#)," and that has been attitude from most of the Democrats who control the House.

The energy and enthusiasm for impeachment will return when our political leaders stand with the base of Democratic Party. Fortunately, we are already seeing signs of that happening, with prominent Democrats such as [Elizabeth Warren](#), [Kamala Harris](#), [Beto O'Rourke](#), [Julian Castro](#), [Pete Buttigieg](#), and [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) speaking out about Donald Trump's alarming abuse of power and the need for Congress to hold him accountable. Their voices are one reason why support for impeachment has rebounded since the drop following Speaker Pelosi's comments.

### **CONCLUSION**

Congress has a constitutional duty to pursue impeachment. It should stand up to a president who is wholly unfit for office and protect the rule of law. As Elizabeth Warren has said: "There is no political inconvenience exception to the Constitution." Electoral considerations should not control decisions about removing a president from office. This matter is too important, and the stakes are too high. But those who are concerned that there are political dangers to impeachment should know that there is a greater danger of inaction. The political arguments against it are fundamentally flawed. Ultimately, it offers Democrats a chance to better control the narrative, put Republicans on the defensive, and can put this issue to rest sooner rather than later.

***Pursuing impeachment is not just the right thing to do, it's good politics. It is time that Congress impeach Donald Trump.***