**RESTORING TRUST 2020**

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CHOICES

At the close of the Constitutional Convention on September 17, 1787, as **Benjamin Franklin** left the hall in Philadelphia, it is reported that he was asked, “What kind of government have you given us, Dr. Franklin?” It is said that he replied:

“***A republic, if you can keep it.”***

# THE GIFT THE FOUNDING FATHERS CRAFTED

Even when the delegates of the [United States Constitutional Convention](https://www.thoughtco.com/constitutional-convention-105426) debated the question in 1787, the exact meanings of the terms ‘republic’ and ‘democracy’ remained unsettled. At the time, there was no term for a representative form of government created “by the people” rather than by a king. American colonists used the terms democracy and republic more or less interchangeably, as remains common today. In both a **republic** and a **democracy**, citizens are empowered to participate in a representational political system. They elect people to represent and protect their interests in how the government functions.

Founding Father [James Madison](https://www.thoughtco.com/james-madison-significant-facts-1773430) may have best described the difference between a democracy and a republic:

“It [the difference] is that in a democracy, the people meet and exercise the government in person: in a republic, they assemble and administer it by their representatives and agents. A democracy, consequently, must be confined to a small spot. A republic may be extended over a large region.”

The Founders intent that the United States should function as a representative democracy, rather than a pure democracy is illustrated in Alexander Hamilton’s [letter of May 19, 1777](https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-01-02-0162), to Gouverneur Morris.

“But a representative democracy, where the right of election is well secured and regulated & the exercise of the legislative, executive and judiciary authorities, is vested in select persons, chosen really and not nominally by the people, will in my opinion be most likely to be happy, regular and durable.”

In a republic, the people elect representatives to make the laws and an executive to enforce those laws.  While the majority still rules in the selection of representatives, an official charter lists and protects certain [inalienable rights](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-are-natural-rights-4108952), thus protecting the minority from the arbitrary political whims of the majority. In this sense, republics like the United States function as “representative democracies.”

The United States is neither a pure republic nor a pure democracy. Instead, it is a hybrid democratic republic. U.S. senators and representatives are the elected lawmakers with specific legislative powers assigned to each. Some U.S. states empower their citizens to make state laws through a form of direct democracy known as the [ballot initiative](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-ballot-initiative-process-3322046). The president is the elected executive, *and the* *Constitution is the official charter*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

AMERICA AT THE BRINK

WHAT WILL BE OUR LEGACY?

* Should elected and appointed government officials who knowingly and repeatedly violate and profane their oath of office and the law under the Constitution be allowed to remain in office?
* Should elected or appointed officials faced with clear evidence of another official’s serious violations of laws of the land who choose to turn a blind eye to those violations be considered fit to remain in office?
* Has President Donald Trump willfully violated his sworn oath of office to protect and defend the Constitution of our Republic? Have members of his cabinet and other appointees flaunted the constitutional safeguards and laws called out by that constitution of our Republic, and the separation of powers among the three branches of government carefully crafted by the founding fathers?

Trump and the senior members of his hand-picked administration have directed or committed all of the following well documented acts, testified to by former members of his inner circle and administration in spite of intimidation by him or his enablers.

* Active efforts to deny US citizens the ability to vote by sabotaging the US Postal Service, reducing poll locations in areas populated areas, spreading lies about the reliability of mail in ballots, and suborning the rigging of the “electoral college elector selection. √
* Encouraging party operatives at the state and local levels to thwart the voting in areas likely to vote blue by removing polling locations and staffing and using intimidation, and by undermining the ability of votes to be counted in any way possible.
* Creating and incessantly repeating the false narrative of massive voter fraud in spite of sworn statements by administration law enforcement officials who testify to congress that there is no evidence to support his false claims while he denigrates their reputation. √
* Lying incessantly to the public and suborning perjury by members of his administration and firing those who won’t do it.
* Defying congressional subpoenas and directing others in his administration to do the same in violation of the Constitution.
* Soliciting of and Suborning Russian interference against Democratic campaign 2016 and current 2020 election. √
* Withholding delivery of urgently needed congressionally authorized defensive weapons demanding that the new president of Ukraine declare that potential opponent Joe Biden was involved in Ukraine Gas deals in return for delivering those weapons to defend against Russia’s “green men” and the influx of arms to attack the sovereignty of Ukraine. √
* Sharing classified data with Russian government officials in the Oval Office to show his brilliance,
* Replacing Director of Intelligence who testified that Russia had influenced and interfered in the 2016 election to aid Trump’s election. √
* Firing the US Attorney General for recusing himself from that investigation, and not blocking the Mueller investigation.
* Hiring William Barr as new AG to do his bidding
* Firing FBI director Comey for not pledging unconditional fealty.
* Admittedly deceiving and denying the American public the realities of the Covid19 epidemic.
* Firing and replacing the competent and respected CDC Leadership relying instead on Fox News for medical advice. Warping all recommendations by the CDC staff that disagreed with his irresponsible and untrue declarations.
* Firing Inspectors general of several agencies investigating whistle blower complaints in defense, intel, state and Dept of Health and Safety.
* Making bogus claims of mail fraud in the upcoming 2020 election in prior election process. and replaces head of Postal service to obstruct mail in voting by removing key sorting capability, removing mail boxes and reducing postal workers. √
* ignoring intelligence from his hand-picked Director of National Intelligence warning that Russia had put a bounty on killing US troops in Afghanistan and refusing to confront Putin and lying about not having been briefed. √
* Trying to eliminate sanctions of Russia overwhelmingly voted by a Republican dominated senate after Russian invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine.
* Abruptly abandoning Kurdish US Allies in NE Syria against objections of his Secretary of Defense by withdrawing troops to the oil fields bordering Iraq. √
* Refusing to confront Putin on Russian military aggressive confrontations with US troops remaining in eastern Syria putting troops at risk. √.
* Attempting to restore Russian membership in the G-7 expelled after the invasion and seizure of Ukrainian Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine.
* Continuing frequent personal and private telecons with Putin un-monitored in violation of National security policy.
* Directing his crony ambassador to the UK to get British Open moved to Trump golf course in Scotland.
* Refusing to separate his financial interests from flagrant conflicts of interests “encouraging” foreign and domestic visitors to stay at his properties.
* Possible Trump enterprise acceptance of laundered money from Russian Putin Oligarchs, in return for approval to build Moscow Trump Tower and other Projects, or to work off his debt?
* Violating with contempt of Constitutional authority granted to the legislative branch
* Publicly encouraging intimidation of voters at polling places by his supporters.
* Fiercely refusing to provide financial data as other presidents have done since Watergate, directing members of his cabinet to deny data subpoenaed by congress as required by law. Why?

Perhaps the answer can be found in why Donald Trump has fought with every means at his disposal to prevent disclosure of his tax returns. Is it because it would disclose the magnitude of losses and tax fraud in his business and expose how poor a business man he is? Or is it because it would reveal to whom he is indebted at home or abroad.

The long sought and recently revealed financial information obtained by NY state authorities after the courts granted them the right to that data raise serious questions. First the lack of payment of any taxes for so many years suggest possible tax fraud, but more than that, much of his massive current debt may be held by Russian interests who are part of Vladimir Putin’s inner circle of operatives. That in and of itself would make Trump a national security risk under long standing US national security regulations.

Do any of these actions rise to the level of high crimes under the US Constitution? The check marked items seem to be candidates worthy of consideration.

Article III, Section 3 of the United States Constitution states that **“*Whoever, owing allegiance to the United States, levies war against them or adheres to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort within the United States or elsewhere,*** *is guilty of treason and shall suffer death, or shall be imprisoned not less than five years and fined under this title but not less than $10,000; and shall be incapable of holding any office under the United States.(June 25, 1948, ch. 645,* [*62 Stat. 807*](https://www.law.cornell.edu/rio/citation/62_Stat._807)*;* [*Pub. L. 103–322, title XXXIII, § 330016(2)(J)*](https://www.law.cornell.edu/rio/citation/Pub._L._103-322)*, Sept. 13, 1994,* [*108 Stat. 2148*](https://www.law.cornell.edu/rio/citation/108_Stat._2148)*.)*

Would Americans be justified in concluding by any honest interpretation of Article III Section 3 of the Constitution that: 1) Donald Trump has committed numerous acts of treason? And 2) that Trump has and continues to violate his sworn oath of office, and every concept of human decency, inviting the nation’s most dangerous adversaries to sabotage our nation while he trashes and dismantles all the crucial checks and safeguards envisioned by our nation’s founders who knew the dangers of greed and despotism as well as the dangers of mob rule?

Yet with only one exception, the Republican senate majority orchestrated by Majority Leader McConnell refused to hear any testimony by witnesses during Trump’s impeachment trial in spite of information that oozed out from some disenchanted administration insiders who had the courage to put the national interest above politics and their own interests.

Senate Majority Leader McConnell for his part, has blocked any legislation passed by the democratic house to be considered in the senate and orchestrated the obstruction of justice by denying any legislative remedy or witness testimony about Trump’s possible treachery during the impeachment trial to protect his master.

William Barr for his part has abused his office as the nation’s chief law enforcement officer to protect his master and stifle independent investigation or dissent within his department about his politicized leadership and support, and:

* Withheld damaging details of the Mueller report, mischaracterized it to the public and congress, and transferred investigators to discredit independent investigative agencies and safeguards of our nation.
* Opened investigations into the FBI and censored Mueller report with unjustified redactions overriding the career professional prosecutors, to do the bidding of Trump.
* Replaced lead attorney to interfere in SDNY AG investigation of Trump corruption in NY State.
* Brought in “unmarked” storm troopers from various unidentified agencies to suppress peaceful citizen demonstrations in DC’s Lafayette square for Trump’s disgusting “Walk in The Park”.
* Is trying even now to reduce/reverse conviction of Michael Flynn who acted as an agent of Putin’s Russia as a member of Trump’s transition team and lied to investigators about his role as an agent of a foreign power.

Then there are the abuses of power, and conflicts of interest by other Trump enablers, --political appointees with obvious conflicts of interest ‘rubber stamped’ by McConnell’s republican majority and who have routinely issued orders within their purview to roll back administrative constraints on their former business interests, and those of the president who would be emperor. At the same time, they have assumed royally rich entitlements and privileges at the tax payers’ expense.

Vladimir Putin must be delighted at how successfully he and his intelligence apparatus have co-opted a narcissistic illiterate scoff law and helped convince a significant segment of the American people to elect him. The irony is that they did it by employing American developed internet and social media technology to sow discord and disinformation in the process. Even in the face of the Mueller report and subsequent revelations that clearly found that Russian Intelligence interfered in the 2016 election and has continued to do so, the republican party leadership has avoided facing that truth.

Conclusion

The question before the American people is:

* Should any elected officials after taking a sworn oath to hear fairly and fully the evidence in a trial and aware of witnesses with evidence about potential serious law violations by another elected official charged with high crimes and misdemeanors, and yet choose to obstruct the full investigation be considered fit to remain in office? Or have they forfeited the right to hold high office?
* Should those same elected officials, who in less than a decade, have transformed the party of Lincoln into a cesspool of corruption, be allowed to continue their feckless hypocrisy, betraying our nation in order to cling to power?
* Should a senate majority leader who regularly violates his sworn oath of office at the bidding of a corrupt tyrant be entitled to remain in office?
* Should some of the richest American oligarchs and corporations be allowed to continue to pillage our nation’s wealth and environment while evading payment of their fair share of the cost of liberty and well-being for all citizens?

Donald Trump and his band of self-serving abettors of corruption and treason have shown us the weaknesses in the fabric of our nation’s safeguards that need to be repaired now to restore trust in our government operations.

Will we learn the lessons of the last four years and rid our nation of those craven dishonest senators who collectively with those in the executive branch have abetted treason as defined in our constitution, and add the necessary safeguards to the damaged rule of law?

Or shall we allow this to be the end of the most successful if imperfect experiment of democracy in history?

We the voters will decide the answers to these questions between now and November 3rd -- first by communicating to all our elected officials what we want and then backing it up with our votes and assuring they are delivered and counted correctly.

***As Franklin said, “It is a Republic if you can keep it”***

1. The historical perspective about the debate, intent and final resolution of differences among the founders about our form of government and constitution is largely excerpted from an essay on by Robert Longley. He is an author and scholar on the work of our nation’s founding fathers and has covered U.S. government, citizenship and American history for ThoughtCo since 1997 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)