

THREE WAYS THE INDICTMENT OF DONALD TRUMP HURTS AMERICA

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Former President Donald Trump has been indicted for illegally storing and hiding classified documents. As conservative radio host Steve Gruber describes it, the “bananafication” of our republic continues apace.

There are three reasons every American — even those of us not supporting Trump’s 2024 campaign — should find this further assault on the former president repugnant.

First, it reinforces the view, shared by many conservatives, that our government delivers a two-tiered system of justice — one for people on the right and another for those on the left. Donald Trump, after all, is not the only public official found to have mishandled secret documents.

Special Counsel Jack Smith actually claimed with a straight face as he brought the indictment: “We have one set of laws in this country, and they apply to everyone.” History proves otherwise.

Former President Bill Clinton was found to have taken audio recordings of his discussions while in the White House and kept them in his sock drawer after his term was up. Judicial Watch sued to access the tapes, claiming they should be considered part of the presidential archive. But a judge ruled against the conservative group, claiming she had no jurisdiction and that such demands could only be made by the National Archives and Records Administration. NARA declined to seek the tapes.

Former FBI head James Comey concluded in 2016 that former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her aides were “extremely careless in their handling of very sensitive, highly classified information,” which was stored on an authorized and vulnerable personal server.

Further, on several occasions, Clinton appears to have destroyed evidence of that misconduct. Moreover, like Trump, Clinton did not fully comply when asked to provide all the emails that had been sent; the FBI found tens of thousands of additional “work-related” messages on that unauthorized server, some of which contained secret information.

Clinton was not indicted for her misconduct; Comey explained that Clinton’s misbehavior was not linked to “disloyalty to the United States” or “efforts to obstruct justice.” His decisions, he said, came down to evaluating her “intent.”

Joe Biden also illegally kept classified information. Instead of being indicted, news of the secret documents found at the Penn Biden Center on November 2, 2022, was mysteriously kept from the public — six days before the midterm elections. The discovery was finally “leaked” by CBS news in January.

This week’s indictment blasts Trump for carelessly storing documents in rooms accessible to unauthorized persons. Were the papers stacked in the garage of Biden’s Delaware home more secure?

To many Americans, the former president’s skirmishing with authorities over his presidential papers is classic Trump behavior — high-handed, ornery, disorganized and lazy, yes, but not criminal. The indictment chronicles

his half-hearted efforts to go through the hundreds of boxes containing his personal papers; it *never* alleges that his refusal to comply with a subpoena was part of a bigger crime, like betraying the U.S.

Also, it seems quite possible Trump refused to turn over his Oval Office papers because he feared the FBI would mine those records for material that could embarrass him or be used against his candidacy. Such paranoia, given the findings of the report from Special Counsel John Durham, which chronicled the weaponizing of that agency to attack Trump politically, would be entirely justified.

Second, the announcement of Trump's indictment just happened to occur on the very day that members of Congress were shown an FBI document containing credible allegations that Biden accepted a \$5 million bribe from a Ukrainian company.

Instead of burrowing in on claims from a trusted whistleblower that our president, as vice president, accepted payment from Burisma in return for helping to oust Ukraine's top prosecutor, Biden's Justice Department created a powerful distraction.

This is unacceptable. The allegations against Biden are not far-fetched. We know for a fact that Biden pushed Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in March 2016 to fire Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin, threatening to pull \$1 billion in U.S. aid unless he did so. We know that because Biden actually boasted about it to a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Here's what Biden didn't tell the council: Shokin was at the time apparently orchestrating a corruption investigation into Burisma, where Hunter Biden was being paid millions of dollars to sit on the board.

This corruption accusation casts a shadow over Biden's presidency, undermining not only the White House but also our country's standing on the world stage. That is unacceptable. The allegations need to be investigated transparently and speedily by the Department of Justice; unhappily, that is unlikely to happen.

Third, Biden has talked a great deal about protecting our democracy and the sanctity of open and fair elections. Yet Biden's DOJ indicting his most likely 2024 campaign rival on charges that, as in the case of Hillary Clinton, might or might not justify prosecution, qualify as election interference. The president is running for another term; polls show his prospects are poor.

When a sitting president is struggling to get his approval ratings above 40 percent, he is in trouble. An NBC News survey from last month showed that 70 percent of voters, and more than half of Democrats, do not want Biden to run.

At the same time, surveys show Biden and Trump neck and neck in a potential match-up. Currently, the Real Clear Politics average of polls shows Trump slightly ahead.

Democrats hope this most recent indictment will hurt Trump in a general election but also solidify Trump's lead among Republicans 2024 hopefuls. They think Trump is the GOP candidate Biden can most easily beat, since he thinks he has done so before.

Biden campaigned in 2020 promising to bring the country together. Instead, he has attacked and villainized Republicans and supporters of Donald Trump, widening our divides. This is just the latest installment.

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