

CRESTVIEW News Bulletin

Opinion

GUEST COLUMN: How did we get to impeachment?

By Dwight W. Polk, Niceville

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Dwight W. Polk of Niceville writes: “If Americans are not convinced by the overwhelming evidence already available, they should be concerned about our worldwide standing.”

The Republican Party has been splitting into competing factions for years. The loss of moderate (or even liberal-leaning) Republicans from the 1950s through the 1980s left the party split into two factions, much like their original roots (Know-Nothings and Whigs).

One well-known local Republican, Wendell Griffith, in his last contributions to this newspaper, declared himself a Whig and told locals to “Do your own damn thinking.” The last 10-20 years have seen another faction develop and become a significant voting and cultural block within the party. This group identifies as the Alt-Right.

The devolution of the Republican Party in part can be traced to Rupert Murdoch’s Fox. According to Rick Wilson (Republican strategist): “Fox has an incredible normative effect on Republican voters ... as the state propaganda arm of the Republican Party.”

He said party strategists could target Republican audiences, “... separating them from the facts, separate them off from the inconvenience of details and the actual policies and use it as ... [a] network ... to get folks fired up.” Furthermore: “The Fox audience is now solely motivated by Trump and not by ... the conservative movement or issues.”

The resulting alternate reality, however, has been aided and abetted over many years by conservative media from talk-radio hosts and bloggers to far-right newspaper columnists.

It should be no surprise that Vladimir Putin was able to advance his interests as well as those of Trump by using the same type of specific demographic targeting, with help from Paul Manafort and others connected to the Trump campaign, in 2016.

The hacking of the email accounts of Hillary Clinton and John Podesta, however, did come as a surprise. In spite of Trump's record of corruption, his willingness to excuse and even publicly encourage Putin's intervention in the electoral process was unexpected. Trump's own words ring true: "Everything to me is about corruption."

The latest scandal is Trump's documented attempt to extort damaging false allegations against Former Vice President Joe Biden's family from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. In return, Trump would release money appropriated by Congress for Ukrainian security support. This is classic quid pro quo. Furthermore, withholding congressionally appropriated funds (impoundment) was determined to be unconstitutional when President Richard Nixon tried it.

Multiple attempts by Trump to obstruct the Mueller investigation; thwart congressional investigations; improperly create, store, and maintain official documents; and openly reveal highly classified information are further evidence of abuse of power and outright incompetence.

If Americans are not convinced by the overwhelming evidence already available, they should be concerned about our worldwide standing.

It was not true of the Obama administration, but it is absolutely fact now that our enemies do not respect us (Putin made fun of the presidential seal, declared that the U.S. is no longer the world's dominant power, and joked about interfering in the 2020 elections); and our friends have no assurance that we will stand with them when threatened (Trump abandoned the Kurds in Syria to protect his towers in Istanbul).