

The Federalist Capers

Okay, nobody break the country, we worked really hard on it.

Issue No. 4 • March 2017

FREE

Quote of the month

"It's crazy what we're watching every day. It's absolutely crazy. He keeps repeating ridiculous throwaway lines that are not true at all, and sort of avoiding this issue of Russia as if we're some kind of fools for asking the question. Really? Your opposition was hacked, and the Russians were responsible for it, and your people were on the phone with Russia on the same day it was happening, and we're fools for asking the question? No, sir. We are not fools for asking this question, and we demand to know the answer ... You owe this to the American people."

—Fox News anchor Shepard Smith, 2/16/2017 (referring to Trump's press conference earlier that day).

How deep are Trump's ties to Russia?

"I have nothing to do with Russia. I told you, I have no deals there, I have no anything," the President told reporters on February 16, repeating an old lie. In fact, Trump's ties to Russia are many and varied.

Some of Trump's top staff have had obvious ties to Russia. Retired General Michael Flynn, who has been photographed with Putin at a Russian gala, recently resigned as National Security Adviser amid reports of his improper communications with Russia before inauguration. Onetime campaign manager Paul Manafort worked directly with former Ukrainian President Yanukovich, who fled to Russia to escape a treason charge.

The President has also had business ties to Russia. In 2013 he traveled to Moscow for the Miss Universe pageant, which he owns, and met privately with Putin's former economy minister. His numerous plans to build hotels in the country have never materialized. But the true extent of his business with Russia is shrouded in secrecy, because Trump has refused to release his tax returns. He has flouted this decades-old tradition of transparency despite a WhiteHouse.gov petition for their release garnering over a million signatures—an all-time record.

A dossier of unverified intelligence, compiled by an MI6 agent, claims that Russia has blackmail material on Trump. The dossier also details how Trump was groomed by Russia over several years to become President in order to sow discord in Western alliances. While the veracity of the document is still questionable, we do know—from the heads of both the FBI and the CIA—that Russia tried to manipulate the 2016 U.S. election to Trump's advantage.

None of this proves any nefarious wrongdoing by Trump. But his repeated lies and bizarre lack of transparency raise serious, ongoing questions about how much he's being influenced by a brutal, autocratic regime.

Trump calls the American free press "the enemy of the people"

The President has hit on a simple strategy for dealing with criticism from the media: Call them all liars. One of his favorite punching bags is the "failing @nytimes" (whose subscription rate has, in fact, skyrocketed since the election). In February alone, Trump used the terms "fake news" and "fake media" over a dozen times on Twitter, but cited no credible evidence for his accusation.

He has now repeatedly called the news media "the enemy of the people." Fox News anchor Chris Wallace pointed out that this goes beyond merely criticizing the press and "crosses an important line." Trump's condemnation is especially striking given his reluctance to criticize savage tyrants such as Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte.

On February 24, the Trump administration went even further, excluding the *New York Times*, CNN, and the BBC (among others) from a news briefing, while including extreme-right "news" organization Breitbart. As Republican Senator John McCain recently reminded us, suppressing the media "is how dictators get started."

How to write to your Senator—a letter template

[date]

The Honorable [Senator's full name]

[Senator's address, line 1]

[Senator's address, line 2]

Dear Senator [last name]:

[A single sentence stating clearly, precisely, and politely what you want your Senator to do. Example: Please vote 'yes' on S. 65: The Presidential Conflicts of Interest Act. You can look up information on all active bills in Congress, and all members of Congress, at govtrack.us]

[Second paragraph. Briefly state your reasoning and make your case. This should be short (1–3 sentences). The whole letter should not exceed one page. Remember, your letter is one of thousands, so it's very unlikely your Senator will actually read it. Your Senator's staff will, however, keep a tally of what constituents ask for, and those numbers will matter to your Senator very much.]

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of our state. [Or some variation on this.]

[sign your name here]

[your full name]

[your address, line 1]

[your address, line 2]

[your email (optional)]

What can I do?

Protest, rally, march. The Trump Tax March (TaxMarch.org & [@taxmarch](https://twitter.com/taxmarch)) will demand the release of Trump's tax returns on Tax Day, April 15. The March for Science (MarchForScience.com & [@ScienceMarchDC](https://twitter.com/ScienceMarchDC)) will be Earth Day, April 22.

Donate \$10 to ProPublica, which is “an independent, nonprofit newsroom that produces investigative journalism in the public interest.”

We need strong, independent journalism now more than ever. Go to propublica.org.



Vote. Register (if you haven't already) at vote.gov.

Remember, there are elections in 2017. Mostly local stuff, but local stuff matters too. And the 2018 election, which will decide 33 Senate seats and all 435 House seats, will be crucial.

Voting is the single most important thing you can do.

For more ideas, go to BrianDBuckley.com and click “What can I do?” at the top of the page.

Comments, questions, suggestions, ideas, hateful diatribes? Email: buckley.d.brian@gmail.com

Senior Executive Editor Overlord: Brian Buckley

Minion Editor: Paul Burns