

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group, on behalf of Navigator Research
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Navigator Special Release: Framing the Next Step on Impeachment

Welcome to NAVIGATOR – a project designed to better understand the American public’s views on issues of the day and help advocates, elected officials, and other interested parties understand the language, imagery and messaging needed to make and win key policy arguments. This edition features findings from a national online survey of 1,500 registered voters conducted November 1-5, 2019.

Every month, we pick a few topics for exploration. The topics we select aren’t meant to cover every issue area facing the progressive community, but rather to give actionable advice on how to talk about key issue areas. Last month, we focused on the impeachment inquiry that had been recently launched in the House of Representatives. In this volume, we take a second look.

Key takeaways:

- Since October, support for impeachment remains steady.
- There are both credible validators and compelling facts to make a strong case about Trump’s wrongdoing.
- An important next step is making it clear that Trump’s specific actions justify impeachment as laid out in the Constitution.

Most Americans continue to support impeachment.

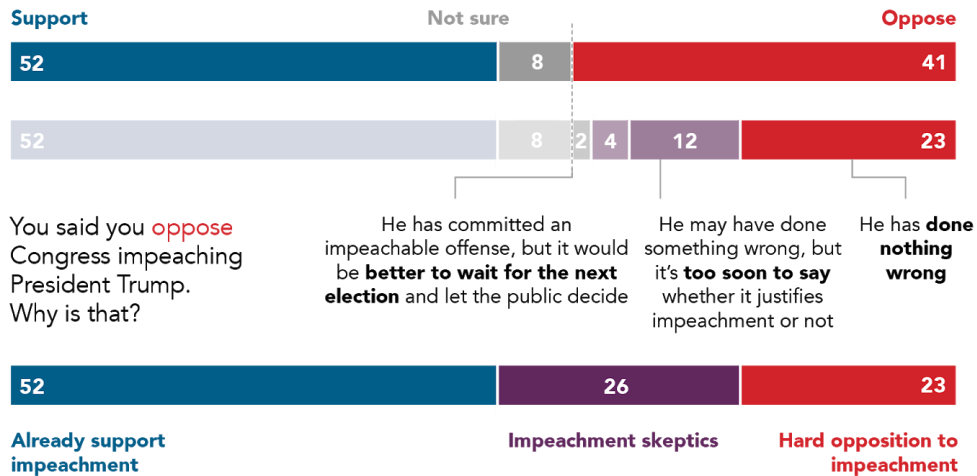
The latest Navigator Research poll finds support for House Democrats’ impeachment inquiry steady since last month’s [survey](#) (conducted October 3-7), with 52% of Americans in favor of impeachment and 41% of Americans opposed. It was 52% in favor and 43% opposed last month.

There is still a segment of “soft” opposition and undecideds. While support for impeachment holds firm, there remains an additional segment of Americans not yet convinced. Eight percent (8%) are undecided, and nearly half of impeachment opponents (18% of the public) oppose impeachment currently but do NOT agree with Trump that he did nothing wrong (just 23% of Americans offer the president full exoneration). This 26% – we call them “Impeachment Skeptics” – include the following groups:

- 8% who are undecided about whether to impeach Trump;
- 12% who believe he may have done something wrong, but are not ready to say it justifies impeachment;
- 4% who oppose impeachment despite believing Trump committed impeachable offenses, and would prefer to wait for the next election to let the public weigh in; and,
- 2% who did not offer a reasoning for opposing impeachment.

Breaking down support for impeachment

Do you support or oppose Congress impeaching President Trump?



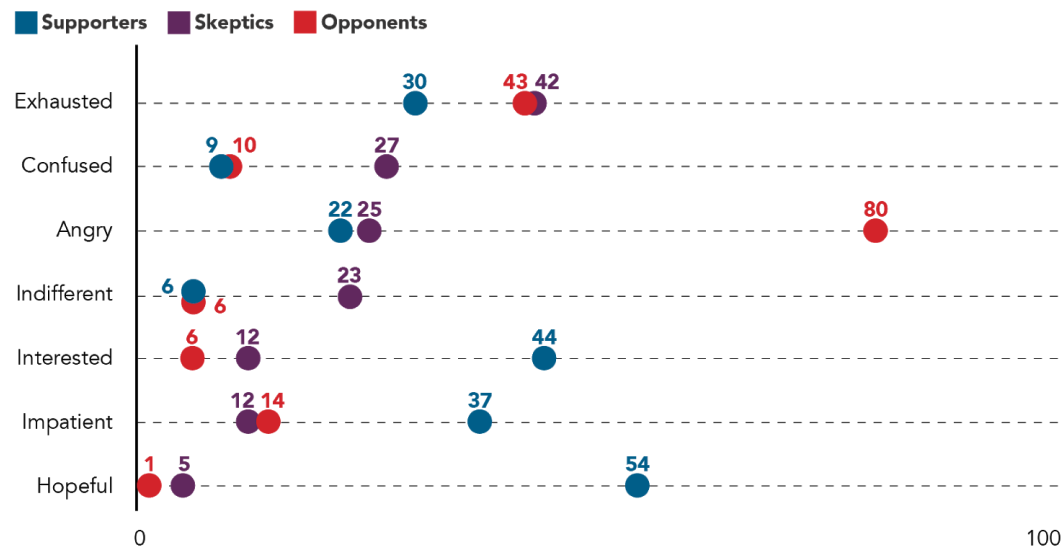
National online survey of 1,500 registered voters conducted November 1-5, 2019. For more info, visit navigatortresearch.org

Given Democrats already overwhelmingly support impeachment, the conflicted Skeptics are a disproportionately Republican-leaning group. Fifty-one percent (51%) identify as Republicans, 27% as Democrats and 22% as purely independent. They also generally approve of the president's overall job performance (56% approve, 38% disapprove), particularly his handling of the economy (65% approve, 26% disapprove).

One warning sign for progressives is Trump's process arguments may be working on some of these Skeptics.

- More are hearing about the process in general (55% have been hearing "a lot" about "an impeachment inquiry for Donald Trump") than are hearing about Trump withholding military aid to get Ukraine to help his reelection (just 30% have been hearing "a lot" about this).
- Skeptics are also particularly likely to say the process has been unfair (48%) rather than fair (18%), though the broader public takes the opposite view (47% fair, 36% unfair).
- Skeptics are also disproportionately already exhausted and confused by the proceedings so far. They are not as hopeful as impeachment supporters or as angry as opponents.

Below are some emotions people might feel about the impeachment inquiry. Please indicate which ones best describe your personal feelings about it.



Skeptics are a challenging group, and many of them may be resistant to shifting from their current opposition to impeachment. However, many are also truly conflicted about Trump's actions. When presented with arguments made by supporters of impeachment (presented later in this memo), roughly half (49%) of Skeptics find at least one argument for impeachment convincing.

Framing the Discussion on Law & Order

Despite what some might think, a debate about the rule of law is fundamentally good terrain for progressives when Trump is the foil. When compared to President Trump, Democrats in Congress are more trusted on "the rule of law" by 14 points, with 49% of respondents trusting Democrats more compared to 35% who trust Trump more. On "protecting law and order," 46% of Americans trust Democrats more, while 39% trust Trump more. However, the advantage is narrower when Democrats are pitted against Republicans in Congress – President Trump is uniquely flawed on this metric.

More suspect Trump of wrongdoing than support impeachment.

There remains room for impeachment support to increase.

Sixty-two percent (62%) believe Donald Trump definitely or probably has abused his power as president and 54% that he has definitely or probably committed a crime as president.

Initially, by 14 points (46% to 32%), respondents say the facts of the case "point to clear wrongdoing by Trump that is worthy of impeachment" rather than exonerate Trump, with 22% unsure. After hearing more about the pro-impeachment case, the undecided share drops to 14%, and more see impeachable conduct (54% to 32%). The movement, mostly coming from those initially uncertain about the facts, underscores the necessity of describing Trump's conduct and why it is impeachable.

Two tasks for supporters of impeachment: Elevating the right validators and emphasizing the right facts.

Task 1: Elevate validators who are seen as clearly putting the national interest ahead of partisan politics.

Military veterans are credible story-tellers of Trump's actions relating to Ukraine. Advocates for impeachment can benefit from emphasizing veterans like Army lieutenant Alexander Vindman and Vietnam veteran Bill Taylor who continue to corroborate the basic story at the center of the impeachment inquiry. Addressing reluctant audiences with an emphasis on these speakers' military backgrounds, non-partisan diplomatic or national security experience, and bipartisan credentials (including their appointment by Trump in the first place) can also be persuasive.

On the other hand, framing witnesses as having more complicated and partisan backstories – like appointees who turned on Trump, or those “appointed by Obama” but confirmed in a bipartisan way – is less effective for telling this story. The public appears less interested in the political “gotcha” moments of people switching sides than they are in the credibility of veterans and public servants who demonstrate their commitment to country over party.

Now you are going to see some descriptions of some people who have spoken out against Donald Trump during the impeachment inquiry. For each one, please indicate how likely it is that this person is telling the truth. (Among Impeachment Skeptics only)

■ Likely telling the truth ■ Too difficult to say ■ Not likely telling the truth

An Iraq war veteran who has worked on national security in the White House under Republican and Democratic administrations

55	32	13
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An Iraq war veteran working on national security in the White House

49	36	15
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A Vietnam veteran and career diplomat appointed by the Trump administration to oversee Ukraine policy

48	35	17
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A Vietnam veteran and career diplomat

43	32	25
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A Trump campaign donor who came forward and testified against Trump

29	34	36
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A former ambassador to Ukraine appointed by President Barack Obama and confirmed by a Republican-controlled Senate

24	34	42
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Task 2: Restate the basic facts and tie it to the Constitution. One especially effective message frames Trump's actions as the “solicitation of a bribe.”

Navigator introduced respondents to various specific facts and statements about Donald Trump's behavior relating to Ukraine and investigating Joe Biden, and asked them to rate how weak or strong of a case each makes for impeachment on its own.

Messaging focused on Trump's solicitation of a bribe from the Ukrainian president is especially resonant and should be front and center. Skeptics are more likely to say this builds a strong case for impeachment than any of the other pieces of evidence presented. This statement explains

clearly what Trump did, casts it as more than merely asking for foreign assistance, and shows it was a direct violation of something listed in the Constitution as an impeachable offense.

Other statements focused on subpoenas and obstruction of justice, the government whistleblower, and removal of key passages from the transcript of the phone call with the Ukrainian president are less effective. One of the least persuasive statements cites diplomat Bill Taylor's claim that there was a "quid pro quo."

Making the case for impeachment

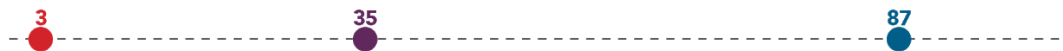
Percentage saying each statement made a somewhat or very strong case for impeachment.

■ Supporters ■ Skeptics ■ Opponents

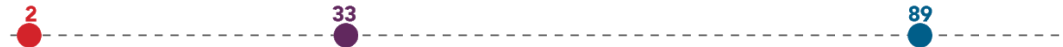
If Trump used taxpayer-funded military aid to pressure a foreign country to give his reelection campaign something of value, that is soliciting a bribe, an impeachable offense listed in the Constitution.



An Army officer who was the top National Security Council officer on Ukraine repeatedly raised concerns about Trump's pressure tactics on Ukraine, which he felt was necessary to report out of a "sense of duty."



According to a transcript of his phone call, Trump asked the President of Ukraine to "do us a favor" and investigate Joe Biden if Ukraine wanted to get the military aid approved by Congress.



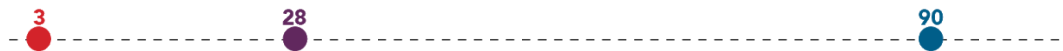
Trump put his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani in charge of pressuring foreign governments like Ukraine to help with his reelection. Federal prosecutors are now investigating whether Giuliani broke foreign lobbying laws.



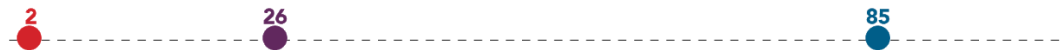
Top Trump officials tried to cover up the scandal by hiding a record of Trump's call to the Ukrainian President on a special computer system for highly sensitive, classified information, where it didn't belong.



Trump's chief of staff actually admitted in a press conference that there was a quid pro quo where military aid was withheld as part of an exchange to get Ukraine to investigate Democrats. He said, "that's why we held up the money."



Top Trump officials tried to cover up the scandal by taking out key passages from a transcript of Trump's call to the Ukrainian president. A national security official testified the missing words were replaced with a "...".



Leaders from both parties, including Republican Utah Senator Mitt Romney and former Ohio Governor John Kasich, have expressed serious concern about Trump's actions and expressed support for the impeachment inquiry.



0 100

Ladder up to impeachment: State clearly what Trump did, and why it is impeachable.

Advocates for impeachment should focus on Trump's use of taxpayer-funded military aid to get something for himself and make a clear connection to the behavior being both legally wrong *and* impeachable. In a separate thematic test, describing Trump's actions as a violation of the Constitution by soliciting a bribe again resonates, as do arguments that Trump abused his power and broke the law. These same three arguments were also most effective among the group of respondents most likely to change their mind about whether the facts of the case were on Trump's side or not.

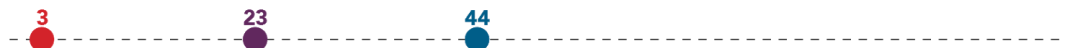
"Abuse of power" remains the most compelling shorthand, with 29% of Skeptics saying it describes what most troubles them about Trump's behavior. This places it ahead of "acting like he is above the law" (21%), "endangered national security" (19%), "bribery" (19%), and "corruption" (18%).

Below are some statements from people who support impeaching Donald Trump. Please indicate whether you find each of the following statements to be convincing as a reason for impeachment, or not.

% Placing each argument in top two most convincing

■ Supporters ■ Skeptics ■ Opponents

President Trump **abused his power** by withholding military aid to Ukraine for his own personal political gain.



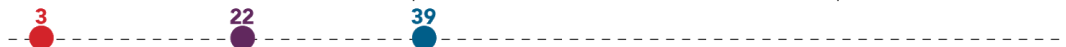
There is clear evidence from many reliable sources that build a strong case for impeachment President Trump.



There is evidence President Trump **solicited a bribe**, which the Constitution lists as grounds for impeachment.



Nobody is above the law, but President Trump broke the law by asking a foreign country to help with his reelection.



National security experts, diplomats, and war heroes say President Trump's actions have put our country at risk.



The bottom line: In order to move the opinions of people who start out undecided or believing that Trump did something wrong, but not necessarily impeachable, advocates have to explicitly connect the dots between actions, crime, and the Constitution.