

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Global Strategy Group & GBA Strategies
DATE: February 13th, 2019
RE: **SURVEY RESULTS** – Americans strongly support Democrats’ oversight of the Trump administration

Americans are solidly behind congressional Democrats’ efforts to conduct rigorous oversight of the Trump administration and uncover any potential crimes. In particular, most believe strongly that no one is above the law and so it is Congress’s duty to uncover possible criminal activity in the administration. Further, few are moved by opposition arguments questioning congressional Democrats’ intentions.

Key findings from Global Strategy Group and GBA Strategies’ recent survey, including 1,012 interviews with Americans nationwide plus an additional oversample of 400 interviews in battleground congressional districts, are as follows:

- **Americans overwhelmingly believe that it is Congress’s job to find out if Trump or senior administration officials have committed any crimes.** Americans of all partisan leanings reach consensus on the following statement (86% agree, including 95% of Democrats, 91% of Independents, and 75% of Republicans) and 51% agree strongly: *Part of the checks and balances established by the Constitution mean it’s Congress’s job to know whether the President or senior officials have committed any crimes.* Messaging recommendations in this memo further demonstrate Americans’ concerns about potential criminality.
- **Americans want Democrats in Congress to investigate senior officials in the Trump administration.** When asked directly if they “support or oppose Democrats in Congress conducting investigations into senior officials in the Trump administration,” a clear majority (60% support/40% oppose) support this oversight and nearly two in five (39%) “strongly” support it.
- **Support for congressional investigations is very durable.** Support for Democrats’ investigations stays at 60% (with 38% still supporting them strongly) even after respondents read a paragraph drawn from anti-oversight language claiming these investigations would be a “politically-motivated witch hunt.”
- **Americans believe strongly that President Trump is not above the law.** When shown the following statement, Americans again reach agreement across partisan lines (84% agree, including 94% of Democrats, 84% of Independents, and 72% of Republicans) and a majority (56%) agree strongly: *No one is above the law. Congress has investigated past presidential administrations. The Trump administration shouldn’t get a special pass.*
- **The public is particularly concerned that the administration is not looking out for regular people.** After reading a list of possible reasons why Congress should conduct oversight of the administration, a plurality (24%) choose the rationale that “senior officials are not looking out for the public on issues that affect the lives of regular people” as the most important. This rationale is particularly important for Independents (35%). Concern that “senior officials are engaging in criminal activities” ranks as the second most important reason, both for Americans overall (21%) and Independents (20%).

MESSAGING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Supporters of oversight should emphasize potential criminality over self-enrichment when talking about Trump’s taxes.** When presented with different messages in support of investigating Trump’s taxes, Americans are more persuaded by a focus on how Trump may have unfairly gamed the tax code or “committed outright fraud” to avoid paying taxes (43% very convincing) and how he may be covering up “shady or even illegal financial dealings” (42% very convincing). A message focused on how we don’t know if the tax reform bill that Trump passed “directly benefited him” tested as the least persuasive message on this topic (39% very convincing).
- **Russian meddling is a strong rationale for congressional oversight and doesn’t need to invoke Trump directly.** Nearly half of Americans (47%) rate the following message about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election as a “very convincing” reason to support investigations into the Trump administration, more than any other message tested: *Our intelligence agencies have all concluded Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election. We need to protect the integrity and security of our elections so that it can never happen again.*

This message also rates as one of the most persuasive for self-identifying Independents (40% very convincing), underscoring that Americans recognize the importance of investigating Russian interference regardless of their partisan preferences.

- **When talking about the Trump-Russia investigation, focus on obstruction of justice and the importance of asking questions about collusion rather than simply asserting collusion may have occurred.** Just over two in five Americans (41%) rate a message about how “President Trump has tried to obstruct the Justice Department’s independent investigation into Russian interference in the election” as a “very convincing” reason to support investigations.

In a split-sample test, a message on possible collusion resonates more strongly when it includes language about how we won’t know the outcome of an investigation until it is done and emphasizes the importance of asking questions:

- *President Trump and his campaign may have actively worked with Russia and Vladimir Putin in order to win the 2016 presidential election. We won’t know the outcome of an investigation until hearings are held and records are read. Sometimes investigations take time. But it’s still important to ask questions. (40% very convincing)*
- *President Trump and his campaign may have actively worked with Russia and Vladimir Putin in order to win the 2016 presidential election. (35% very convincing)*

LANGUAGE GUIDANCE

What to talk about...

- Hurting regular people
- Not looking out for people on issues that affect them
- Following the same rules as other presidents
- Potential criminality

What to say...

- Oversight
- Checks and balances
- Nobody is above the law
- Trump has a history of using potentially illegal tactics to avoid taxes

What not to talk about...

- Self-enrichment
- Political games/stunts

What not to say...

- Investigations
- Accountability
- Trump is acting like he's hiding something / Trump is hiding how his policies are benefiting him

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group and GBA Strategies conducted an online survey of 1,012 registered voters nationwide, plus an additional oversample of 400 registered voters in battleground Congressional districts, between January 8-15, 2019. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic and demographic divisions of the electorate are properly represented.