

Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

Section 3 – The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled

MeetToImpeach.com

FEATURE:

Impeachment: week in review

A weekly one paragraph summary report and analysis, followed by recaps (with links) of representative on-line articles and essays – typically 800 to 1,600 words.

Week ending 4/29/2018 (~ 2,130 words)

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Minneapolis 4/30/18 Edition – There was something of a lull in impeachment news this week – enough so to allow the thought-impact of [A Higher Loyalty](#), fired FBI Director James Comey’s new book, to more fully sink in. Accordingly, this week features a book review of [A Higher Loyalty](#), in lieu of a summary of topic-specific impeachment news. As a political book, the publishing impact of this book appears heading towards best-seller status among all books in the Trump era. However, as perspective, its reported 357,000 print copies sold the first week was about one order of magnitude less than the 2.6 million copies sold in the first week for the latest Harry Potter book. Meanwhile, the Dow seems to be stabilizing, but at a significantly lower level than the early 2018 peak – and the leaders of North and South Korea seem to be signaling there might be some kind of “breakthrough” in their region – or possibly just at least enough to allow the U.S. to somehow back off from the threatening situation of recent months.

Book Review: Two Tales of One City – [A Higher Loyalty](#) meets Lower Swamp D.C.

[Time reports](#) James Comey's new book, [A Higher Loyalty](#), was already at #1 on [Amazon's](#) best seller list by March 13th, 2018, more than a month before the scheduled April 17th release date. The initial print run has been reported to be 850,000. [Publisher’s Weekly](#) reported April 30th that 357,000 print copies sold in a single week, and it was already the fourth best selling book of the year. By comparison (for some perspective), they also noted that in August 2016 [Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts 1 and 2](#) moved 2.6 million print copies its

first week.

This week's special edition presents a review of A Higher Loyalty:

Two Tales of One City – A Higher Loyalty meets Lower Swamp D.C.

This is the first book out by an Administration Insider* -- but we need to add an asterisk to that category. FBI Directors are normally not regarded as part of an Administration – in recent decades they have been de facto independent agency heads -- removable, but with a ten-year term of office to mark them as apart from political appointees. Comey acquired his “insider” status for book publishing purposes by being ousted -- President Trump's decision to fire Comey has itself been seen as a violation and traducing of FBI's independence – something intended to ensure America is a “Rule of Law” country, and that a Presidential strong man doesn't use law enforcement and intelligence gathering agencies against his political enemies. Ultimately, Comey's firing could lead to President Trump's impeachment for obstruction of justice – grounds brought against both Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton during their impeachment proceedings.

Comey loosely structures his memoir in a framework of “Truth, Lies, and Leadership” – sketching his own experiences under people he thought were good or great leaders, while also presenting an opposite-world view: how the world of organized crime is structured and led. But the fates have woven this vital inside story together with another – the culmination of Hillary Clinton's world wide web of verisimilitude in an e-mail scandal that probably cost her the Presidency.

Comey sees many parallels between the world of organized crime and President Trump's leadership and organizational culture. And we need a full stop here. It's too easy to become numb these days. The idea of a former FBI Director comparing a President of the United States to a mob boss must be called out for what it is: SHOCKING, APPALLING, UNPRECEDENTED... Add all the synonyms you want... we must NOT allow ourselves to become un-stunned.

Comey gives many examples of what he calls a “silent circle of assent” – an environment where Trump does virtually all the talking, leaving those around him with two choices: either interrupt and challenge what they know to be lies, or say nothing, and join the “silent circle of assent.” It appears that when President Trump uses phrases like “everyone is telling me...” he

may in fact simply mean that no one interrupts him when he streams whatever idea – often if not typically a lie – he is currently pushing.

Comey gives an example of his own experience of breaking-and-entering into the President’s stream-of-consciousness in a meeting. They were on the topic of Bill O’Reilly’s early 2017 pre-Super Bowl interview of President Trump. O’Reilly had pressed Trump on whether he “respected” Putin. Here’s a brief excerpt from that interview:

“I do respect him,” Trump said. “but I respect a lot of people. That doesn’t mean I’m going to get along with him.”

“But he’s a killer,” O’Reilly said. “Putin’s a killer.”

“There are a lot of killers. We’ve got a lot of killers,” Trump replied. What do you think? Our country’s so innocent?”

Trump was on his stream-of-consciousness roll, when he came around to that exchange again -- it’s one of the most telling passages in the book (page 250):

As I sat there, I watched the president building with his words a cocoon of alternative reality that he was busily wrapping around all of us. I must have agreed that he had the largest inauguration in history, as he asserted at our previous meetings, because I didn’t challenge that. I must therefore agree that his interview with O’Reilly was great, his answers brilliant, because I sat there and didn’t object. But I’d be damned if I was going to let this trick work on me again. And this time he gave me the opening. Looking at me, he said: “You think it was a great answer, right?” and started to move on.

I jumped on it and did something I might never have done as a younger person – especially to a president of the United States. Something I’d never seen anyone else do around Trump in the limited number of interactions I’d had with him. I can’t remember if it was mid-sentence or in the middle of a brief pause before he launched into the next set of assertions to which we were all supposed to agree, but I interrupted his monologue.

“The first part of your answer was fine, Mr. President,” I said, as he took a breath and looked at me with a blank expression. “But not the second part. We aren’t the kind of killers that Putin is.”

At that remark, Trump stopped talking altogether. In that brightly lit room, with its shiny gold curtains, a shadow seemed to cross his face. I could see something change in his eyes. A hardness, or darkness. In a blink, the eyes narrowed and his jaw tightened. He looked like someone who wasn’t used to being challenged or corrected by those around him. He was the one who was supposed to be in complete control. With a small comment, I had just poured a cold dose of criticism and reality on his shameful moral equivalence between Putin’s thugs and the men and women of our government. And just

as quickly as the glower crossed his face, it was gone. It was as if I had not spoken, and had never been born. The meeting was done.

Half a page later, Comey sums up his reaction:

Still, the encounter left me shaken. I had never seen anything like it in the Oval Office. As I found myself thrust into the Trump orbit, I once again was having flashbacks to my earlier career as a prosecutor against the Mob. The silent circle of assent. The boss in complete control. The loyalty oaths. The us-versus-them world view. The lying about all things, large and small, in service to some code of loyalty that put the organization above morality and above the truth.

Unfortunately, Comey's searing accounts of President Trump comprise only one of two stories that have taken residence and root in our Washington Swamp. The other is the tangled mess that he made in 2016 with his off... then-on-12-days-before-the-election announcements about the FBI's investigation of Hillary Clinton's e-mails. Comey's effort to make a clear distinction between Truth and Lies – two words bravely capitalized from a writing style popular when nouns were something Real -- frays badly as it filters through the “beyond-a-reasonable-doubt” standard for prosecuting lying, including to the FBI. On the one hand, he offers a plausible-but-very-lawyerly account of why the investigation of Clinton's e-mail mess never led to criminal charges against her. But for many Trump supporters -- and also for those few who are genuinely trying to be completely open-minded and fair -- there is still a real stench to that whole course of events – starting with this hypothetical but obvious Q and A:

Q: Why did she set up the system in the first place?

Highly plausible **A:** To keep physical control of all the e-mails -- to keep them out of the hands of the government -- so no leaker, or freedom-of-information filing, or future historian could unearth anything politically damaging to her.

While this Q and A is utterly knee-jerk to many, it's also the obvious suspect in any line-up of plausible reasons. But in the framework of government investigations it runs head-on into both the “innocent-until-proven-guilty” bedrock of American law, and this reality: the underlying law was simply never written in contemplation of someone who could/would set up an entirely privatized communications system while serving as Secretary of State.

Here's how the wet firecracker of Hillary Clinton's e-mail scandal fizzled out in early

July 2016, after her FBI interview, and Comey's announcement that the investigation was over... until it wasn't (page 183):

After review and careful discussion of her answers, there was nothing in her comments that we could prove was a lie beyond a reasonable doubt. There was no moment where the investigators caught her in a lie. She did not at any point confess wrongdoing or indicate that she knew what she had done with her e-mails was wrong. Whether we believed her or not, we had no significant proof otherwise. And there was no additional work the investigators thought they should do. This case was done. Now the American people needed to know what the FBI had found.

Then... big whoops! On October 27th – twelve days before the election – the Hillary Clinton investigators were back in a conference room with Comey to inform him that a laptop from former Congressman Anthony Wiener, then the separated husband of Clinton's close aide Huma Abedin, had been found to contain hundreds of thousands of e-mails from Clinton's personal e-mail domain – far more than the totals they had been working with, and possibly including early e-mails that had never been found. At that time, the group thought a review of the Wiener laptop e-mails couldn't possibly be completed before the election.

Comey agreed to immediately seek a search warrant for the laptop and concluded that since the close of the investigation had been announced, Congress would have to be informed of the new development, which required the investigation be reopened. This created massive controversy – Trump supporters were stirred up with an appearance of continuing concealment – while Democratic surrogates blasted Comey... fearing that this new development might cost Clinton the election. Although the FBI was able to re-complete the investigation the weekend before the election with no change in the conclusion, it's impossible to ignore or objectively weigh and assess the widespread uproar that it caused at the end of the campaign. While Comey's decision to reopen the investigation is understandable given the circumstances – the better of two very bad alternatives – it may have had a deciding impact leading to President Trump's victory.

Comey's narrative, and his assessment of what appears to be literally the organized-crime character of the Trump administration is vital to America's national discussion today. But the second tale woven into this book -- the Clinton e-mail saga -- ensures at a minimum that there's a kind of permanent shroud of impenetrable smoke around whatever fire Comey has uncovered.

Together, both of these towering twin tales suggest that the basic commitment of America to err on the side of caution when the powers of government are used for criminal law enforcement may give too much institutional deference – across the board -- to both clever manipulators and mob-boss wannabees. We need to do some real re-thinking about the whole process of impeachment and removal from office – especially the Senate’s decriminalized power to remove and disqualify from office -- if we are ever able to “drain the swamp.”

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