



If the president does it...

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"If the president does it, that means it's not illegal." President Richard Nixon, April 6, 1977

When our country was established, the founders recognized the dangers of putting too much power into one person's hands. Accordingly, the Constitution established three equal branches of government to serve as checks-and-balances against each other.

Article II describes the powers and duties of the president. The Constitution recognizes that there must be one final voice in certain decisions, but it also recognizes that no one voice can have absolute authority. In spite of what Richard Nixon said, the president should not be above the law. Nixon resigned before he was impeached, so he never paid for his crimes.

President Ronald Reagan broke the law (Boland Amendment) when he sold weapons to Iran to finance Nicaraguan terrorists. President George W. Bush broke the law (Constitution, Article 6; Amendment 8) when he supported the use of torture. Neither president faced consequences for their actions. Now President Donald Trump is testing the Constitution once more. If he succeeds, we'll have to admit that the Constitution was a nice idea, but it doesn't work any more.

Article I, Section 9, Clause 8, known as the Emoluments Clause, says that no government official shall accept any gifts from foreign governments. These gifts can be money, influence, or anything that personally benefits the official. Trump has business interests in many countries. He needs the influence and goodwill of foreign governments for his businesses to function. We don't know what concessions he might make to these governments. He refuses to be open about his business interests and what will come first, them or America's national security.

Trump refuses to give up control of his businesses. He says he gave legal control to his sons, but there's no proof of that. He still meets with his sons and they sit in on White House meetings. He is currently violating the U.S. government lease for his hotel in Washington, D.C. He owes at least \$650 million to China, and unknown millions to oligarchs in Russia.

He refuses to release his taxes, which 74 percent of Americans want to see, so we don't know exactly what else he owes to whom. When asked about this on Nov. 22, 2016, Trump said, "The president can't have a conflict of interest." In other words, he can do what he wants.

In an interview broadcast on Super Bowl Sunday, Bill O'Reilly asked Trump if he respected Russian President Putin. Trump said, "I do respect him." Respect: To admire someone deeply, as a result of their abilities, qualities, or achievements. Trump admires Putin because Putin gets away with things Trump only dreams of.

Trump stated several times we should have "taken" Iraq's oil. The fact that stealing another country's resources is a war crime doesn't bother him. On Jan. 21, when speaking to the CIA, Trump reinforced this idea: "...we should have kept the oil. But, okay, maybe we'll have another chance." Does he mean we should re-invade Iraq and steal their oil? Why not? What do a few pesky laws mean to a man like Trump?

Now Trump is facing court challenges to his immigration ban. To put this ban in context, the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, calculated the odds of an American being killed by a refugee-turned-terrorist are one in 3.64 billion. Americans are more likely to be murdered by a native-born white supremacist than by a foreign-born terrorist.

Trump tweeted, "If the ban were announced with a one week notice, the 'bad' would rush into our country during that week. A lot of bad 'dudes' out there!" Trump apparently believes that anyone can walk into a consulate, ask for a visa and get it. This shows absolute ignorance about how a visa is obtained. Not surprising with Trump.

Trump's ban prohibited green card holders from returning to America and the homes and jobs they've had for years. It stopped people who had risked their lives helping America's military. Refugees who get a visa have been vetted "extremely." Trump's ban isn't about national security; it's about discrimination. Judges aren't careless about our safety; they are careful about facts.

For eight years Republicans claimed President Obama was violating the Constitution, without providing any specific examples. Trump has been violating the Constitution from the moment he took the oath of office. He seems to be trying to set a record on Constitutional violations. I just pray he doesn't take the whole country down before he's stopped.