

To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group and Accountable.US
Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2020
Re: Congressional Oversight Survey Key Findings & Messaging Recommendations

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,008 registered voters nationwide from December 11th to 15th, 2019 on behalf of Accountable.US to assess where Americans stand on congressional oversight of the Trump administration and to understand the issues they feel Congress should prioritize investigating. This poll followed a similar online survey research project of registered voters that was conducted during the last Congress, which found that the public overwhelmingly believed it was Congress' responsibility to perform oversight over the Trump administration, and members of Congress were not seen to be doing enough. Now, after more than a year in this new Congress, and in light of impeachment, the public still believes oversight of the presidential administration is one of Congress' central duties and that allegations of corruption and ethics violations in the Trump administration should be investigated.

Our key findings and messaging recommendations from the research are outlined below.

Key Findings:

- **The public believes oversight of the presidential administration is Congress' responsibility and want a stronger check on senior officials in the Trump administration, who they believe are corrupt.** Consistent with 2018, an overwhelming majority of Americans think it is Congress' responsibility to conduct oversight of senior officials in the presidential administration (80% in 2019; 82% in 2018), and even further, a narrow majority of Americans (52%) believe Congress should be conducting more oversight of senior officials in the Trump administration. This is unsurprising as, similar to 2018, 51% of the public feels that senior officials in the Trump administration are more corrupt than in past presidential administrations (50% in 2018).
- **Even amid a polarizing impeachment process, Americans still want Congress to make oversight a priority, including those who oppose impeachment.** Beyond impeachment, a plurality of Americans do not think Congress is paying enough attention to corruption and ethics violations in the Trump administration (38%) or spending enough time on oversight of the administration (37%, including 41% of independents). In fact, a large swath of Americans who oppose impeachment still support greater oversight of the administration (42% oppose impeachment; 46% of those opposed to impeachment support congressional oversight of the administration).
- **Democrats are more trusted than Republicans to hold the administration accountable.** Democrats in Congress are not only viewed more favorably than congressional Republicans and senior members of the Trump administration (43% favorable; +4 since 2018), but as in 2018, they are also more trusted than congressional Republicans when it comes to conducting oversight of the presidential administration (50% trust Democrats; 42% trust Republicans).
- **As corruption is seen as a serious problem in the Trump administration, the public thinks senior officials in the administration have something to hide.** There is a clear sense that members of the Trump administration should appear before congressional committees (83%) and comply with congressional subpoenas (70%). However, Americans recognize corruption as a serious problem in the Trump administration (65%), and therefore believe members of the administration are stonewalling Congress because they have something to hide (54%).



- **Congress should aggressively pursue instances where senior administration officials abused taxpayer funds or misused their positions to enrich themselves or their family.** Instances in which money is misused, particularly when it affects veterans and impacts student loan repayment are particularly disturbing to Americans, as they are concerned about where their money is going. Issues such as student loan forgiveness for disabled veterans (58% support investigation), Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross' insider trading (58% support investigation), and mismanagement of Department of Veterans Affairs funds (55% support investigation) rise to the top among possible avenues for congressional investigation. Persuadable voters, those voters who are independent or soft partisans, feel this most strongly as they show the greatest support for investigating Ross' insider trading (62% support investigation) and investigating all of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' student loan scandals, including awarding a student loan collection contract to a company she was once tied to financially (60% support investigation), neglecting to process student loan forgiveness applications from potentially defrauded borrowers (59% support investigation), and halting student loan forgiveness for disabled veterans (58% support investigation).
- **The presidential administration's abuse of power is most concerning to the public, which suggests that any investigation into possible corruption and ethics violations is better than inaction.** Majorities of Americans believe senior administration officials abusing taxpayer dollars for their own benefit (53% very serious problem; +2 since 2018), lying to Congress (53% very serious problem), wasting taxpayer money through unnecessary spending (53% very serious problem; +2 since 2018), and using their positions to enrich themselves or family members (52% very serious problem; +1 since 2018) are very serious problems, potentially even worthy of investigation.

Messaging Recommendations:

- **Acknowledge oversight as part of Congress' responsibility to protect American taxpayers.** It is Congress' job to protect taxpayer money by conducting oversight of members of the Trump administration.
- **Make the issue of oversight bipartisan.** Too many members of Congress are playing politics instead of working together to do their jobs of conducting bipartisan oversight of the entire Trump administration.
- **Center oversight around the issues that matter most to the public.** We should be investigating whether members of the administration are...
 - Misusing taxpayer dollars to pay for personal perks
 - Potentially wasting taxpayer dollars through unnecessary spending
 - Possibly lying to Congress
 - Using their position to enrich themselves

About the poll

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 1,008 registered voters nationwide from December 11th to 15th, 2019. The results have a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. The margin of error among subgroups is larger. A previous survey of 1,011 registered voters nationwide was conducted in September 2018.