
Valley Voices: Let's forget about Russia and start solving America's problems

By Joseph W. Brady / Contributed Content

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For the past several months national news has been dominated by talk of President Trump's alleged ties to Russia, his son's meeting with a Russian lawyer and allegations of Russian influence in the 2016 presidential election. In the meantime, the enormous challenges facing our nation continue to be ignored by elected leaders.

There are at least eight ongoing investigations — by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, the Senate Judiciary and House Oversight and Government Reform Committees, Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and three separate FBI inquiries — of one or more aspects of this molehill out of which mountains are being made. However these investigations turn out it will not alter the fact that Donald Trump was elected president and the Democrats (as well as many Republicans) are so mad about it that they are determined obstruct everything he tries to do, even if the country suffers as a result. Efforts to influence American elections should be taken seriously and we must take steps to protect the integrity of our democratic processes; they should not, however, be used as an excuse for government inaction.

In the face of unprecedentedly hostile opposition President Trump has made every effort to move his agenda forward. In his first 100 days in office Trump signed more bills into law than any president since Harry Truman. Unfortunately, many of these laws were of limited or only symbolic significance, with his key initiatives on health care, tax reform, infrastructure, immigration, terrorism and the budget tied up in Congress or the courts.

America is in serious trouble. One-third of US counties are down to a single health insurer participating in Obamacare health exchanges and several will have zero participating insurers by the end of the year. Our young people are awash in student loan debt, delaying their decisions to marry and purchase homes. Our tax system is convoluted and forces businesses to create jobs overseas and investors to hoard cash rather than invest in job-creating enterprises.

Our roads, bridges, airports and waterways are crumbling in a state of disrepair and our porous borders continue to allow drugs, criminals and terrorists into our country at an alarming rate. While the president continues to speak forcefully on all of these issues our congressional representatives appear to be more interested in getting off one-liners on CNN than confronting the serious challenges facing the nation. I, for one, care more about the future of America than what Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin might have said over dinner.

Congressional inaction did not begin with the Trump administration; in fact, three of the four least productive congresses in the past 30 years in terms of bills signed into law occurred during the Obama administration in 2011, 2013 and 2015. Even the most basic of governmental functions, passing a budget, is beyond the grasp of the United States Congress.

The last time all appropriations bills were enacted by the start of a fiscal year was 1996 and not a single appropriations bill has been enacted on-time since 2009. Instead, the government has been kept operating by a series of continuing resolutions to keep the thing chugging along at the same levels of spending for another year or so. In the meantime the national debt has grown to nearly \$20 trillion, over \$ 61,000 for every man, woman and child in the country.

This madness cannot be allowed to continue. We must implore our elected representatives to cease their partisan bickering, the endless rounds of investigations and accusations and the nonstop grandstanding and begin working to come to agreement on solutions to the multiple challenges faced by our nation. We cannot afford to spend the next three and a half years contesting the outcome of the last election. Those who are in office now must fulfill their commitment to those who put them there.

Joseph W. Brady is president of the Bradco Companies and a member of the Victor Valley College Board of Trustees.

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