

To: Interested Parties
From: Kyle Herrig, Congressional Integrity Project Executive Director
Date: September 27, 2023
Re: Setting the Record Straight Before the Second Republican Presidential Debate

Despite Trump's absence from the debate stage, MAGA Republicans in Congress and on the debate stage are expected to fall all over themselves defending him and attacking President Joe Biden.

Just days before a government shutdown driven by their own party and called for by Trump, Republican presidential candidates must be held accountable for ignoring the serious issues facing this country while they waste time baselessly attacking President Biden and promoting an impeachment inquiry.

Everyone watching and covering the debates should see through the impeachment inquiry for what it is: an evidence free political stunt designed to defend Donald Trump and curry favor with his MAGA base while hurting President Biden.

MAGA Republicans have [admitted themselves](#) that their impeachment is [all a political stunt](#) to help Donald Trump and hurt Joe Biden. The MAGA Republican investigations have failed to [produce any evidence](#) to back up their outrageous claims, so they are re-hashing the same lies and debunked conspiracy theories that have been investigated and proven false again and again. In fact, this week's rushed, slapdash, fact-free impeachment hearing the day following the debate has already been described by James Comer to show **no new evidence** of any wrongdoing. This whole charade is a joke designed to distract from the government shutdown because McCarthy and MAGA Republicans can't govern.

The fact is: President Biden has not interfered in any investigation, including the cases resulting in Trump's indictments, and then-Vice President Biden [never interfered](#) with official Obama administration policy to protect his son. While the facts don't matter to MAGA Republicans – they just want to attack President Biden – [they should matter to the rest of us](#). Here are a list of the top lies MAGA Republicans have repeatedly peddled in their talking points:

LIE #1: President Biden Received Over \$20 Million from Foreign Adversaries

The Facts: The first claim you might hear tomorrow night is that President Biden made \$5 million or \$20 million (they can't decide!) from his son's business dealings. The Washington Post Fact Checker said, "[No evidence has emerged that any of these funds can be traced to Joe Biden himself.](#)" They added, "[a] close reading of the memos, however, finds that [only about \\$7 million](#) can be directly attributed to Biden family members, mostly Hunter, while the rest went to 'associates,' according to the memos. [...] **No money has been traced to Joe Biden.**" Separate analysis in the Washington Post found the Republican investigations did not show "a whiff" of payments to Joe Biden, calling it "[less than a phantom.](#)"

Politico reported the House investigations “[\[don’t\] show a direct payment to Joe Biden.](#)” CNN [fact checked](#) this claim saying “none of these [bank] records confirm any direct payments to Joe Biden or show that he was directly involved in Hunter Biden’s business arrangements.”

LIE #2: President Biden Took Part in Business Meetings, Confirmed By Hunter’s Former Business Partner

The Facts: After Devon Archer, Hunter Biden’s former business partner, sat down with the House Oversight Committee for a transcribed interview, James Comer and others on the committee tied themselves into knots trying to spin the interview as validating their claims. In reality, Archer said President Biden was present on twenty phone calls over a [ten year period](#) holding casual conversations about “the weather” and “fishing” and never spoke once about business dealings.

As [ABC](#) reported: “Archer testified that Joe Biden's interactions with Hunter Biden's associates were ‘not related to commercial business,’ that Joe Biden had no involvement with Burisma, the Ukrainian oil conglomerate on whose board both Archer and Hunter Biden served; that the elder Biden never took any actions to benefit Burisma or Hunter Biden; and that Hunter Biden never asked his father to take any actions that would help his clients, according to the fully transcribed interview with the committee.”

CNN fact checked this claim previously [writing](#) “Archer said ‘nothing’ of importance was ever discussed during these calls. Archer characterized the conversations he witnessed Hunter put his father on speakerphone in front of business associates as Joe Biden asking his son, ‘Where are you, how’s the weather, how’s the fishing, how’s the – whatever it may be.’ Archer added the conversations were ‘not related to commercial business, politics, that kind of stuff.’” The New York Times also [wrote](#) “Beyond Mr. Biden exchanging niceties with associates of his son, Republicans have provided no evidence that the elder Mr. Biden was involved in landing that business or participated in it in any way.”

LIE #3: Treasury Department Suspicious Activity Reports Prove Wrongdoing

The Facts: Suspicious activity reports (SARs) alone do not indicate that a crime was committed. Washington Post fact-checkers [debunked](#) these claims as far back as October 2022, citing top financial analysts who described SARs as “well short of, ‘I think a crime has been committed,’” and merely “a tip” with a low threshold for filing just to be on the safe side: “‘Since banks are subject to enforcement action if they fail to file a SAR when they should have, but suffer no sanction if they file a useless SAR, the general presumption is to file the SAR,’ the group says.”

CNN debunked these claims as well, [writing](#) “The filing of a ‘suspicious activity report,’ or SAR, does not prove wrongdoing. Such reports are not conclusive, and are akin to the

bank providing a tip to investigators, out of an abundance of caution. Financial institutions file millions of SARs each year, but few lead to law enforcement inquiries.”

LIE #4: A Trusted FBI Informant’s Claims Prove President Biden Received a Bribe

The Facts: Republicans have failed to produce evidence of bribery despite subpoenaing the FBI and risking the safety of confidential sources. As our [new report](#) found:

“In early-May, Oversight Chair James Comer (R-KY) and Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) published an open letter to the FBI announcing [subpoenas](#) for an unclassified document supposedly describing an alleged 'criminal scheme involving then-Vice President Biden and a foreign national relating to the exchange of money for policy decisions.' Comer was immediately called out for pushing unsubstantiated allegations in the letter. The Associated Press [noted](#), 'the lawmakers used the word 'alleged' three times in the opening paragraph of the letter and offered no evidence of the veracity of the accusations.' HuffPost reporters [concurred](#): '[Republicans] acknowledged they don't know if the allegation will pan out. [...] backing the allegation despite the scarcity of details.'

When Comer and Grassley obtained the document, form FD-1023, and publicly released a redacted version in July – against the advice of intelligence officials who feared it would 'unnecessarily risks the safety of a confidential source' – it ended up being an [uncorroborated FBI tip](#). Worse still, the owner of Ukrainian energy firm Burisma, had [already rebutted](#) the uncorroborated bribery allegations back in 2019: 'As part of the impeachment inquiry against then-President Trump, Congress learned that Mr. Zlochevsky, the Ukrainian oligarch and the owner of Burisma, whom Republican Committee Members appear to have identified as the source of the allegations memorialized in the Form FD-1023, squarely rebutted these allegations in 2019.'”

The New York Times [reported](#) that the unverified allegation “has since been undercut by other evidence, including by the Ukrainian businessman who is alleged to have been involved and said that no such bribe occurred.”

LIE #5: David Weiss Has Given the Biden Family Special Treatment

The Facts: David Weiss was originally [appointed](#) to serve as US Attorney for Delaware by Donald Trump. Oversight Chair James Comer was [vocal](#) in his support for Weiss remaining US Attorney after the 2020 election. Republicans have claimed Weiss slow-walked the investigation to protect Hunter Biden, but his office's investigation into Hunter Biden began in 2018, [during the Trump administration](#).

The New York Times debunked claims of special treatment, [reporting](#) that the IRS whistleblowers “said many of their complaints arose during the Trump administration, and they made no allegation that President Biden had tried to impede the inquiry.” The investigation began in November 2018 [during the Trump Administration](#) and numerous

delays and decisions to slow-walk the investigation ahead of the 2020 election were ultimately made by Trump-era prosecutors, IRS officials, and investigators who were [aligned](#) with the [widely reported](#) priorities of Trump's [Attorney General](#) at the time. Weiss [has also stated](#) he was “granted ultimate authority over this matter, including responsibility for deciding where, when, and whether to file charges and for making decisions necessary to preserve the integrity of the prosecution.”

Even after Garland named Weiss special counsel, and Hunter Biden was indicted due to David Weiss's investigation, MAGA Republicans continue making the ludicrous claim that because Attorney General Merrick Garland kept Weiss on the case, Weiss is somehow compromised in favor of the Bidens. This shows how unserious MAGA Republicans are – they don't actually care about the facts, they care about throwing a fit no matter what.

LIE #6: President Biden Coordinated With Hunter Biden's Business Partners

The Facts: Contrary to claims that the Office of the Vice President colluded with Hunter Biden's business partner on media responses, the key email touted by House Republicans included a statement [explicitly stating](#) that the Vice President “does not endorse any particular company and has no involvement with this company.” The New York Times [wrote](#) that then-Vice President Biden “publicly pushed back on allegations that his son's business in Ukraine influenced his administration's policies.”

LIE #7: The FBI Is Withholding Evidence Tying President Biden to Wrongdoing

The Facts: One of the lies the MAGA Republicans love the most is that there are somehow tapes being withheld from Congress by the FBI which tie President Biden to bribes. In reality, there is no evidence these tapes actually exist, and Congressional Republicans themselves have admitted that they don't know whether or not the tapes (even if they exist) are [“legit.”](#) In fact, the supposed source for the major claim that President Biden was bribed has previously [said](#) he never spoke to Joe Biden. The Republicans conducting the investigations into President Biden are the ones who are [withholding evidence](#) in order to suit their own narrative.

BONUS: If You're Interested in Corruption, Check Out the Trump Family

If Republican presidential candidates are interested in attacking corruption on the debate stage on Wednesday, they should look no further than Donald Trump's family. As a White House official, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner worked on foreign relations, including the Middle East. Less than six months after he left government, Kushner started a new firm that received [\\$2 billion](#) from a fund tied to the Saudi royal family. Presidential candidate Chris Christie said, [“the grift from this family is breathtaking.”](#) All told, we know Jared and Ivanka Trump earned [\\$640 million](#) during the Trump administration, while working for the U.S. government.