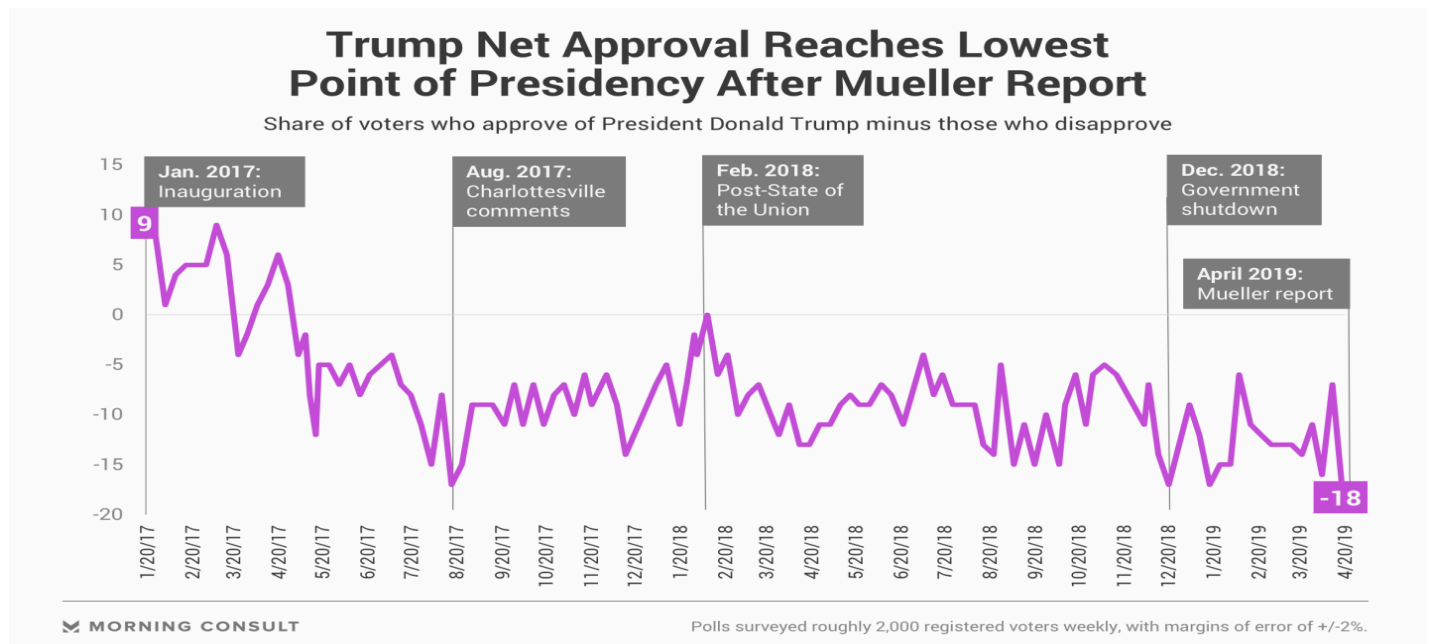


Mueller Report Impact on Congress and 2020 Primary



Public Reaction

Last Thursday the Department of Justice released a redacted version of the full [report](#) that Special Counsel Robert Mueller provided to Attorney General William Barr into allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Recall that on March 24th Attorney General Barr sent a letter to Congress that summarizing the Mueller report findings. Given that the conclusion of the report was already known, and that various news outlets previously reported many of the details in the report, the impact of the story in terms of moving public opinion on Trump has been minimal. A Morning Consult/Politico [poll](#) shows Trump's approval ratings have dipped to the same level during the most protracted government shutdown in U.S. history. Trump was able to rebound from the government shutdown as well as his Charlottesville comments, so it is unlikely that the Mueller report will have a lasting impact given that Trump's approval ratings tend to hover in the low-mid

- Voter opinions on Trump are well baked.
- Pelosi fears Democrats could overplay their hand as Republicans did with Clinton.
- Warren is the first candidate to call for impeachment.
- Republicans must decide whether to investigate the investigators.
- Harder for Trump to work with Congress.

40% in most polls regardless of what he does. A Hill-HarrisX [poll](#) found that 76% of those surveyed said their opinions remained unchanged following last week's release of Mueller's report, while 14% of those polled said the report changed their views against Trump. According to the poll, 10% said Mueller's report changed their minds in favor of Trump. When asked by reporters Monday if he was worried about impeachment, Trump replied: "Not even a little bit."

House Democrats

On Monday House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) held a call with House Democrats to discourage discussions of impeachment. Shortly before the call, a Morning Consult Politico [poll](#) showed 34% of voters support impeaching Trump, compared with 48% who oppose it, similar to the share of voters who said the same in a [poll](#) conducted immediately after the midterm elections. The 5-point drop in support for impeachment since January was driven mainly by Democrats, who soured on impeachment by 12 points, from 71% to 59%. Among those voters who said Congress should begin impeachment proceedings, 52% said it should happen because Trump is unfit for office. 47% said it should happen because he committed an impeachable offense, the same share who expressed that view in January. To placate liberal freshman Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rashida Talib (D-MI), and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) who have endorsed impeachment, Pelosi is encouraging House Democrats to investigate Trump without drafting articles of impeachment. Pelosi is in a tight spot because since House Democrats campaigned in 2018 on an aggressive oversight regime that would take the investigative baton from Mueller to launch their probes on Capitol Hill. However, if voters view Democrats as conducting a purely partisan attack on the president, that could energize and unify the Republican base heading into the 2020 cycle and turn off independent voters. Pelosi remembers when Republicans overplayed their hand in pursuing impeachment of then-President Bill Clinton. In that instance, voters determined that Republicans were seeking purely partisan attacks and ultimately sympathized with Clinton rewarding him with another term. Pelosi recognizes that the Mueller report did not deliver the knockout blow that many Democrats were hoping it would, and instead is trying to focus on landing body shots on Trump to weaken him and Republicans ahead of the 2020 election by keeping the Mueller report and its unflattering findings in the news.

2020

The day after the Mueller report was made public; Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren was the first high profile 2020 nominee to advocate for impeachment. California Senator Kamala Harris's initial reaction was that the Democrats should see the unredacted Mueller report and that Mueller should testify on the Hill

before proceeding. South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg and former Texas Representative Beto O'Rourke both said they see the case for impeachment but deferred to Congress. Warren's call for impeachment reflects her campaign strategy of being very clear about where she stands on issues. Warren has released several detailed policy proposals that seek to appeal to the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, and calling for Trump's impeachment is consistent with that goal. Warren is also behind in the polls and needs to take more aggressive steps to close the gap. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders has expressed concern that pursuing impeachment will distract from educating voters on liberal positions. 2020 Democratic candidates are likely concerned about how the general public will react to calls to impeach Trump and are waiting for new polling and potentially further damning information from additional investigations before beating the impeachment drum loudly. 2020 candidates are not getting many questions about the Mueller report on the campaign trail, as voters are concerned more with traditional pocketbook issues such as the economy and health care. 2020 Democrats also fear that a media cycle dominated by impeachment investigations could suck up all of the oxygen and will make it difficult to introduce themselves to voters.

Republicans

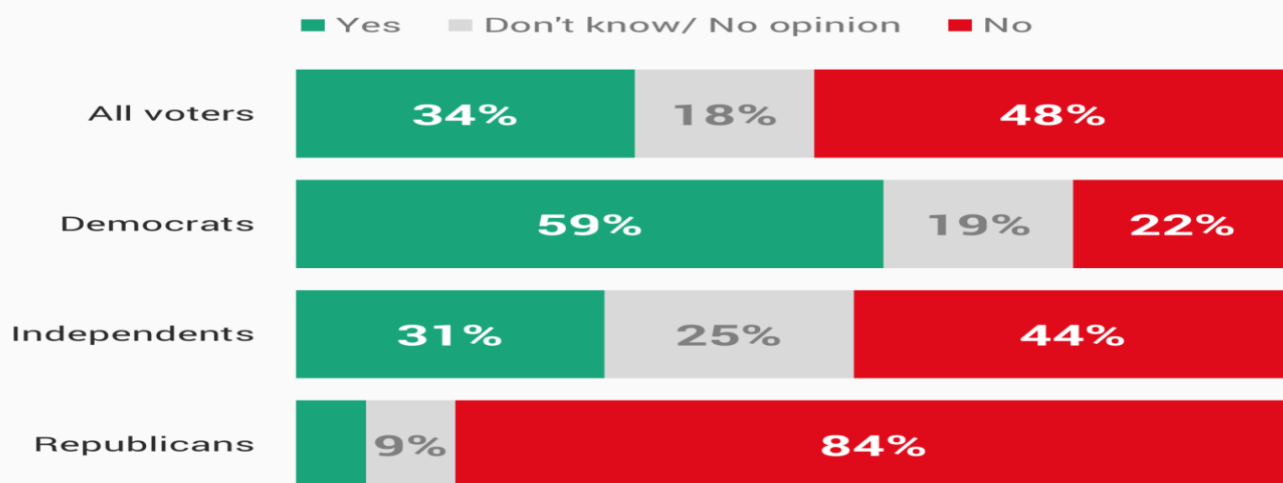
Utah Senator Mitt Romney took a shot at Trump after the release of the Mueller report saying he was "sickened" by the findings, but that that should not be surprising given the political history between those Trump and Romney and the fact that Trump is not overwhelmingly popular in Utah. Maine Senator Susan Collins, who faces reelection in 2020 in a state where Trump is not popular, said she would like to see Mueller testify before Congress. Most other Republicans have said little, which means Democrats know they will not be able to get 20 Republican Senators necessary to vote for impeachment in the Senate where Republicans hold a 53-47 seat advantage. The Mueller report was more damning than the Barr summary had indicated. Republicans must now figure out whether to pursue an investigation into the origins of the Russia probe or attempt to pivot away from the issue. Republicans may be more motivated to scrutinize the Russia investigation if Democrats start using it to push to impeach Trump. South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee which has jurisdiction over the Department of Justice. Graham is also up for reelection in 2020 in a very red pro-Trump state, and therefore fears a primary more than a general election challenge. As a result, Graham will do whatever Trump wants knowing it will help him maintain his Senate seat.

Impact on Legislation

Trump warned during his State of the Union address, "If there is going to be peace and legislation, there cannot be war and investigation." House Democrats desire to investigate Trump will hurt potential areas for bipartisan compromise. Trump and House Democrats are likely to come together on efforts to reduce drug prices and potentially on Trump's new North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA). Infrastructure spending was an area mentioned for potential compromise, but that will be even harder in a more polarized environment. The most significant risk is that partisan feelings will make it challenging to address spending concerns in September where Congress and Trump will need to address the nation's debt ceiling, raise defense and non-defense spending caps, and fund the government. Trump's desire to fund his border wall was already expected to complicate those efforts, and Trump will now have less appetite to provide House Democrats with the political wins needed to secure spending deals while they are investigating him.

Nearly Half of Voters Oppose Impeachment

Do you believe Congress should or should not begin impeachment proceedings to remove President Trump from office?



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