

Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

*Section 3 – The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof, for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.
Immediately after they shall be assembled*

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FEATURE:

Impeachment: week in review

A Monday one paragraph summary report and analysis; followed by recaps (with links) for about ten representative on-line articles and essays – 800 to 1,000 words

Week ending 10/29/2017 (~800 words)

Note: due to the Manafort indictment, this week's cutoff date and report have been extended one day

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Minneapolis 10/31/17 – Special counsel Robert Mueller brought forward two indictments on Monday, a guilty plea was also unsealed and announced. While indictments were expected eventually, Monday's developments were sudden – sketchy reports that they were coming only emerged over the weekend. Frankly, what we have at this point is mostly uncertainty as to the import of these developments. Due to this breaking news, the usual format for this report has been dispensed with.

Indicted were for President Trump's former Campaign Manager Paul Manafort, and his longtime associate Rick Gates. They have posted bonds of \$10 million and \$5 million respectively. Both were indicted for money laundering and other charges, both are under house arrest with passports confiscated, both potentially face decades in prison, and both potentially face millions in fines and/or asset confiscations. There is widespread speculation that special counsel Mueller will attempt to use their legal circumstances as leverage, to obtain their cooperation, and any information they may have regarding his broader investigation.

A former Trump campaign foreign policy advisor, George Papadopoulos, also pled guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russians. Papadopoulos secretly agreed to a plea bargain early this month, and according to the plea bargain agreement, the document was sealed by the court so that he could be a "proactive cooperator." That term is reported to sometimes refer to people who "wear a wire" for prosecutors, recording potentially incriminating evidence while talking with co-conspirators, and others. In some case, people who "wear a wire" may participate in engineering circumstances that may induce incriminating actions and/or statements by others. Mr. Papadopoulos was arrested July 27th 2017. This is another situation where the cooperation of a witness can be rewarded with a more lenient sentence.

Parallels have been drawn between Mr. Papadopoulos' wrongdoing and the July 9, 2016 meeting that

Donald Trump Jr., Mr. Manafort, and Paul Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law, attended with a Russian lawyer. Mr. Manafort both received and sent e-mails regarding that meeting, and is reported to also have discouraged the idea of then-candidate Trump to go to Russia during the campaign. Mr. Manafort has also been reported to have given the Russians private briefings on the campaign in 2016. If any members of the Trump campaign lied to federal officials about either what happened at that meeting, or about the course of events that led to it, they could face the same kind of charges Mr. Papadopoulos pled guilty to.

At the same time, a kind of "Trump counteroffensive" appears to be emerging. The Trump camp's claim is, in part, along this line: that the Clinton campaign may have taken actions that amounted to "setting up" the Trump campaign – attempting to induce or entrap them into either actual collusion with the Russians, or actions that may be difficult to distinguish from collusion.

The Trump camp is challenging special counsel Mueller based on a suggestion that he has a conflict of interest in investigating Trump because he mishandled various aspects of Clinton investigations while he was FBI director. Former director Jim Comey is also being challenged, based on reports that when given information about what has been called the "Russian Dossier" – containing "dirt on Trump," which at one point was being financed by both the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee -- the FBI considered paying the dossier's author, former British spy Christopher Steele, to continue his work.

Power lobbyist Tony Podesta, the brother of John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's former campaign manager, is also being investigated by Mueller, and announced he was leaving the lobbying firm bearing his name. In April 2017 the Podesta Group filed paperwork showing they had done work benefiting the same Ukrainian political party that Manafort had worked for. The Podesta Group said there had been a misunderstanding about who their client was.

These major impeachment-related developments come as the end of the year approaches, with a long to-do list facing President Trump and the Republicans. This is, or was, to be the week for the U.S. House to roll out their tax reform plan. But that's only the top of the list, which also includes: resolving the legal status of "Dreamers," passing a budget, increasing the debt ceiling, and trying to satisfy a clamor to make bi-partisan repairs to Obamacare.

Finally, there is still a question as to whether President Trump might fire Mueller. While that is possible, it would ignite an incredible political firestorm. While President Trump can pardon Mr. Manafort and others for federal crimes, much of their alleged wrongdoing could also result in state charges, which are beyond the reach of a Presidential pardon.

In short, it is too early to assess the implications of today's indictments and plea bargain announcement, or of the thrust of the "Trump counteroffensive."

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