



Timeline: Trump Uses Extreme Anti-Choice Measures As Diversion From Scandal

It's no secret that President Trump uses extreme policies and statements to distract from his ongoing scandals and failures. Often, these extreme diversionary tactics aim at undermining abortion rights and blocking abortion access. From his failure to secure a border wall during the recent government shutdown to his vulgar, offensive comments in the infamous Access Hollywood video, Trump has risked alienating his far-right supporters many times throughout his tenure in office and responded quickly with anti-choice actions.

Trump Discussed Abortion In His 2019 State of the Union Following Unpopular Shutdown

Trump planned to mention abortion in his 2019 State of the Union speech. "President Donald Trump is telling conservative allies he wants to incorporate firm anti-abortion language into his State of the Union address Tuesday, and potentially include an anti-abortion figure among his list of invitees, according to four sources familiar with his plans." [Politico, [1/31/19](#)]

The State of the Union had previously been delayed as Trump oversaw the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, lasting for 35 days. "Trump will be giving his speech a week later than planned thanks to Pelosi, who insisted he delay the annual event until after the government was fully reopened." [Politico, [1/31/19](#); NPR, [1/26/19](#)]

During the shutdown, Trump's disapproval rating "swelled five points to 58 percent" according to Washington Post-ABC News polling. "Public disapproval of President Trump has swelled five points to 58 percent over three months as a majority of Americans continue to hold him and congressional Republicans most responsible for the partial federal government shutdown that ended Friday, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll." In this poll, Trump's approval rating fell to 37 percent from 40 percent in October. CNN's "Poll of Polls" found similar numbers across polling, with an average of 57 percent disapproval and 37 percent approval. CNN also reported that "in each of the four polls that asked respondents to place blame, majorities said blame lies with the President." [Washington Post, [1/25/19](#); CNN, [1/24/19](#)]

Trump aides and anti-choice allies said Trump would discuss abortion in the State of the Union speech "to energize his political base after he caved to Democrats in January to end the shutdown." The Washington Post reported, "Meanwhile, conservative leaders are urging Trump to weave in heavy language on abortion after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) sparked national outcry last week for comments interpreted as defending infanticide. The senior official said Trump is likely to bring up the issue, which aides described as an effective way to energize his political base after he caved to Democrats in January to end the shutdown." Politico talked to anti-choice leader Ralph Reed about the State of the Union: "'The president wants to reaffirm his commitment to pro-life things,' said the

Republican close to the White House, adding that Trump doesn't want his third appearance before a joint session of Congress to be 'all fire and brimstone.'" [Washington Post, [2/3/19](#); Politico, [1/31/19](#)]

The Trump Administration Proposed New Rule On Abortion Charges In Insurance As Democrats Take Back The House In 2018 Elections

BBC News: "Democrats win House in setback for Trump." Democrats won control of the U.S. House in the 2018 elections. BBC News wrote, "A Democratic majority in the lower chamber for the first time in eight years will restrict his ability to steer his programme through Congress... Tuesday's vote was seen as a referendum on a polarising president, even though he is not up for re-election till 2020." [BBC News, [11/7/18](#)]

On the evening of Election Day in 2018, the Trump administration proposed a rule to require health insurance companies to send invoices for abortion coverage separately from standard insurance costs. On November 7th, the Health and Human Services Department, the Treasury Department and the Labor Department announced "Final Rules on Religious and Moral Exemptions and Accommodation for Coverage of Certain Preventive Services Under the Affordable Care Act." [ThinkProgress, [11/8/18](#); HHS.gov, [11/7/18](#)]

Trump Administration Proposes Anti-Choice Domestic Gag Rule Amidst Findings That Revealed "Extensive" Russian Conspiracy To Elect Trump

On May 16th, 2018, the Senate Intelligence Committee made a statement affirming the Intelligence Community Assessment that Russia attempted to interfere in the 2016 elections to support Trump. Committee Chairman Republican Richard Burr said, "There is no doubt that Russia undertook an unprecedented effort to interfere with our 2016 elections," which Vice Chairman Democrat Mark Warner affirmed: "The Russian effort was extensive, sophisticated, and ordered by President Putin himself for the purpose of helping Donald Trump and hurting Hillary Clinton." [The Office of Senator Richard Burr, [5/16/18](#)]

On May 17th, 2018, Trump tweeted called the Russia investigation "the greatest Witch Hunt in American History." Trump tweeted, "Congratulations America, we are now into the second year of the greatest Witch Hunt in American History...and there is still No Collusion and No Obstruction. The only Collusion was that done by Democrats who were unable to win an Election despite the spending of far more money!" [Twitter, [5/17/18](#); AOL, [5/17/18](#)]

On May 17th, 2018, the Trump administration proposed new Title X regulations to withhold funding from abortion providers or referrers. The New York Times reported, "Clinics that provide abortions or refer patients to places that do would lose federal funding under a new Trump administration rule that takes direct aim at Planned Parenthood, according to three administration officials. The rule, which is to be announced Friday, is a top priority of social conservatives and is the latest move by President Trump to impose curbs on abortion rights, in this case by withholding money from any facility or

program that promotes abortion or refers patients to a caregiver that will provide one.” [New York Times, [5/17/18](#); Guttmacher, [6/20/18](#)]

On May 22nd, Trump tweeted a video highlighting his anti-choice credentials from a previous appearance at a Susan B. Anthony List event. Trump tweeted, “for the first time since since *Roe v. Wade*, America has a Pro-Life President, a Pro-Life Vice President, a Pro-Life House of Representatives and 25 Pro-Life Republican State Capitals!” [Twitter, [5/22/18](#)]



[Twitter, [5/22/18](#)]

The Trump Administration New Policy Favoring Abortion Opponents On The Same Day Of Michael Cohen Raids

On April 9, 2018, “The home, hotel room and office of Trump’s personal attorney Michael Cohen is raided by FBI agents.” Axios: “The FBI raided the office and hotel room of President Trump’s personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, on Monday and took records and payments relating to Stormy Daniels’ case as well as communications between Trump and Cohen.” [Axios, [1/25/19](#); Axios, [4/9/18](#)]

Also on April 9th, 2018, the Trump Administration made it possible for people who oppose abortion to avoid paying a fine for not having health insurance. Rewire wrote, “The Trump administration on Monday expanded the list of Affordable Care Act (ACA) “hardship exemptions,” which waive the fine for lacking health insurance coverage, to include people who object to abortion care. The new guidelines, issued by the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), allow a person who lives in an area where all affordable health

plans in the federal exchange “provide coverage of abortion, contrary to one’s beliefs” to apply for an exemption. The federal government allows people experiencing “financial situations and other circumstances that keep [them] from getting health insurance” to have fees waived for the months they weren’t covered. These situations can include being homeless, experiencing domestic violence, and experiencing the death of a family member.” [Rewire, [4/10/18](#)]

Trump Made An Unprecedented Appearance At Major Anti-Choice Protest Following Breaking News On Stormy Daniels Affair and Payoff

On January 12th, 2018, the Wall Street Journal broke the news that Trump’s lawyer Michael Cohen, paid \$130,000 to porn star Stormy Daniels during the 2016 election to ensure her silence surrounding their affair. The Wall Street Journal wrote, “A lawyer for President Donald Trump arranged a \$130,000 payment to a former adult-film star a month before the 2016 election as part of an agreement that precluded her from publicly discussing an alleged sexual encounter with Mr. Trump, according to people familiar with the matter. Michael Cohen, who spent nearly a decade as a top attorney at the Trump Organization, arranged payment to the woman, Stephanie Clifford, in October 2016 after her lawyer negotiated the nondisclosure agreement with Mr. Cohen, these people said. Ms. Clifford, whose stage name is Stormy Daniels, has privately alleged the encounter with Mr. Trump took place after they met at a July 2006 celebrity golf tournament on the shore of Lake Tahoe, these people said. Mr. Trump married Melania Trump in 2005.” [The Wall Street Journal, [1/12/18](#)]

On January 17th, InTouch Magazine published a 2011 interview with Stormy Daniels about her relationship with Trump. [AOL, [1/17/18](#); The Wrap, [1/17/18](#)]

On January 17th, the White House announced Trump’s plans for an unprecedented live video appearance at the March for Life. [The Washington Post, [1/17/18](#)]

On January 19th, 2018, Trump became the first sitting president to address the March for Life through a live video feed. Trump spoke at the 2018 March for Life through a video address from the White House. [NPR, [1/19/18](#); The White House, [1/19/18](#)]

Trump Released An Updated List Of Possible Supreme Court Nominees Following Republican Losses in 2017 Elections

On November 7th, 2017, Democrats won statewide elections in Virginia and New Jersey: “cracks have begun to show in the movement that ushered Trump into office.” AOL wrote, “One year after major media outlets and forecasters gave President Donald Trump a slim chance of winning the 2016 election against then-rival Hillary Clinton, cracks have begun to show in the movement that ushered Trump into office... But on Tuesday night, one day short of a year since Trump’s 2016 stunner, the tide began to turn on Trumpism. New Jersey and Virginia picked Democratic governors, with Virginia’s losing Republican candidate getting roasted on all sides for his failed embrace of Trumpism. Among Virginia’s newly elected leaders are women, people of color, and the state’s first transgender legislator...Tuesday’s election results show that Trump’s movement may have gone too far in defending Confederate heritage even in a Southern state that’s 70 percent white...But Democrats have until 2020 to work out a challenge

to Trump, and in the meantime, Tuesday showed promise for a movement that can unseat Senate, House, state, and local Republicans and potentially exploit the cracks in the Trumpism.” [AOL, [11/8/17](#)]

On November 17th, 2017, Trump updated his list of Supreme Court shortlisters, adding Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett, and others. On November 17th, the White House released five names to be added to Trump’s Supreme Court short list. “All have Federalist Society ties,” BuzzFeed reported, further noting that all but one of the 25 prospective nominees on the updated list had “a Federalist Society connection, either membership or at least involvement with events.” The outlier was Judge Margaret Ryan of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. BuzzFeed could not confirm whether she had ties to The Federalist Society, and a spokesperson for the group declined to comment. [BuzzFeed, [11/20/17](#)]

Trump Made Graphic Abortion Comments Following The Release Of The Access Hollywood Video During His 2016 Campaign

On October 8th, 2016, the Washington Post released the Access Hollywood video of Trump vulgarly describing his attempts at sexual assault. The Washington Post reported “Donald Trump bragged in vulgar terms about kissing, groping and trying to have sex with women during a 2005 conversation caught on a hot microphone.” Trump said, “And when you’re a star, they let you do it... You can do anything....Grab them by the p---sy.” [The Washington Post, [10/8/16](#)]

Republican leaders and elected officials denounced Trump’s comments in the video, with some withdrawing their support from his campaign. For example, then-Senator Kelly Ayotte said, “I cannot and will not support a candidate for president who brags about degrading and assaulting women. I will not be voting for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton and instead will be writing in Governor Pence for president on Election Day.” Then-Representative Jason Chaffetz said “I’m out,” having previously endorsed Trump. Other Republican leaders did not withdraw their support from Trump’s campaign while criticizing him, including then-Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, who said he was “sickened” by Trump’s comments, and Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who called them “repugnant” and “unacceptable.” [PBS News Hours, [10/7/16](#)]

On October 19th, 2016 Trump graphically and incorrectly described a later term abortion in the final presidential election debate, claiming “you can take the baby and rip the baby out of the womb in the ninth month, on the final day.” Trump said, “In the ninth month you can take the baby and rip the baby right out of the womb, just prior to the birth of the baby. You can say that that’s okay, and Hillary can say that that’s okay, but it’s not okay with me. Because based on what she’s saying and based on where she’s going and where she’s been, you can take the baby and rip the baby out of the womb in the ninth month, on the final day, and that’s not acceptable.” [The Washington Post, [10/20/16](#)]

Prominent anti-choice groups and leaders rallied behind Trump’s abortion comments:

SBA List President Marjorie Dannenfelser celebrated Trump’s debate comments in an op-ed called “Donald Trump’s abortion stance preserves the sanctity of life.” In this piece, Dannenfelser wrote, “The third presidential debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton exposed the deep chasm that exists between them on the issue of abortion....In contrast, Trump has made clear his commitment to overturn Roe v. Wade, sign a ban on late-term abortion, defund Planned Parenthood and uphold the Hyde Amendment. Trump’s strong and

compassionate defense of the unborn in last week's debate forced Clinton to drop her mask. The choice for those who want to uphold the sanctity of human life and the Constitution's guarantee of the right to life to all citizens could not be clearer." Dannenfelsler quoted Trump's comments on "rip[ping] the baby right out of the womb." After the election, Dannenfelsler called Trump's comments in the last debate "a historic moment." [Time, [10/24/16](#), YouTube.com, [11/9/16](#)]

Dannenfelsler And Priests For Life's Frank Pavone wrote a piece encouraging anti-choice voters to support Trump, citing his abortion comment in the debate and noting how the comments went beyond what they could have imagined hearing from past Republican nominees. In "Dear pro-lifers: Trump absolutely worth your vote," Dannenfelsler and Pavone wrote, "In the most recent presidential debate, Trump described the horror of partial-birth abortion. He did a service to all voters in forcing Hillary Clinton to own up to her extreme positions in support of this procedure and expanded abortion-on-demand. Could one imagine Mitt Romney or other past Republican nominees boldly describing late-term abortion and unapologetically proclaiming pro-life beliefs just weeks from the election?" [The Washington Examiner, [11/5/16](#)]

SBA List released an ad in the last week of the campaign featuring Trump's description of abortion from the last general election debate. The digital ad, called "Not Okay," ran in Florida, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio, targeting "638,000 targeted voters in key battleground states." Women Speak Out put out a fundraising appeal around the ad, asking for donations to "fund our final push to Election Day, getting out the pro-life vote and reaching undecided voters. With the race completely tied, it all comes down to turning out our base and persuading undecided voters." Dannenfelsler on the strategy behind the ad: "it's to really bring the point to the people in a handful of states a handful of people will determine the house in the Senate that will determine the fate of a Supreme Court in the future so when you really look at it that means it's just a handful of people and I believe the Catholic faithful can turn this election towards life." As of November 2017, the ad had 527,000 views on Facebook and 53,210 on YouTube. [The National Pulse, [11/7/16](#), SBA-List.org, accessed [11/14/17](#), YouTube.com, [11/4/16](#), Facebook.com, [11/2/16](#), YouTube.com, [11/7/16](#)]