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Three Chairs Issue Statement on White House Blocking Ambassador Sondland Testimony and Documents Committees to Issue Subpoena to Sondland Today

Washington, October 8, 2019

Washington—Today, Rep. Adam B. Schiff, the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Rep. Eliot L. Engel, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, the Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, issued the following statement:

“The House of Representatives is engaged in an impeachment inquiry to determine whether the President violated his oath of office and endangered our national security by pressing Ukraine to launch sham investigations to assist his personal and political interests rather than the interests of the American people. Today, the White House has once again attempted to impede and obstruct the impeachment inquiry.

“This morning, we learned from Ambassador Sondland’s personal attorneys that the State Department left a voicemail last night at 12:30 a.m. informing them that the Trump Administration would not allow the Ambassador to appear today as part of the House’s impeachment inquiry.

“In addition, Ambassador Sondland’s attorneys have informed us that the Ambassador has recovered communications from his personal devices that the Committees requested prior to his interview today. He has turned them over to the State Department, however, and the State Department is withholding them from the Committees, in defiance of our subpoena to Secretary Pompeo.

“These actions appear to be part of the White House’s effort to obstruct the impeachment inquiry and to cover up President Trump’s misconduct from Congress and the American people. Ambassador Sondland’s testimony and documents are vital, and that is precisely why the Administration is now blocking his testimony and withholding his documents.

“We consider this interference to be obstruction of the impeachment inquiry.

“We will be issuing subpoena to Ambassador Sondland for both his testimony and documents.”

Background:

The call record of the President’s July 25 conversation with Ukrainian President Zelensky makes clear that the President pressed Ukraine to initiate investigations to benefit him personally and politically.

Text messages among senior State Department officials put Ambassador Sondland at the center of efforts to extract from the Ukrainians a pledge to investigate Joe and Hunter Biden and debunked conspiracy theories concerning the 2016 election in exchange for a White House visit the Ukrainian president desperately sought.

Ambassador Sondland routinely spoke to the President and had conversations with both Trump and Zelensky before and after the July 25 call, noting in a July 26 television interview that he spoke to President Trump “a few minutes before” President Trump made the July 25 phone call.

Sondland was at the center of the effort to orchestrate a Ukrainian statement confirming the initiation of the investigations in return for a White House visit, telling other senior officials on August 9 that “potus [sic] really wants the deliverable.”

The pressure on Ukraine took place as the White House also withheld hundreds of millions of dollars in vital military assistance to counter Russian aggression.

Sondland and other State Department officials discussed whether military security assistance was being withheld from Ukraine as leverage to force the initiation of the political investigations.

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Minority Privacy Policy

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