

by NCR Editorial Staff

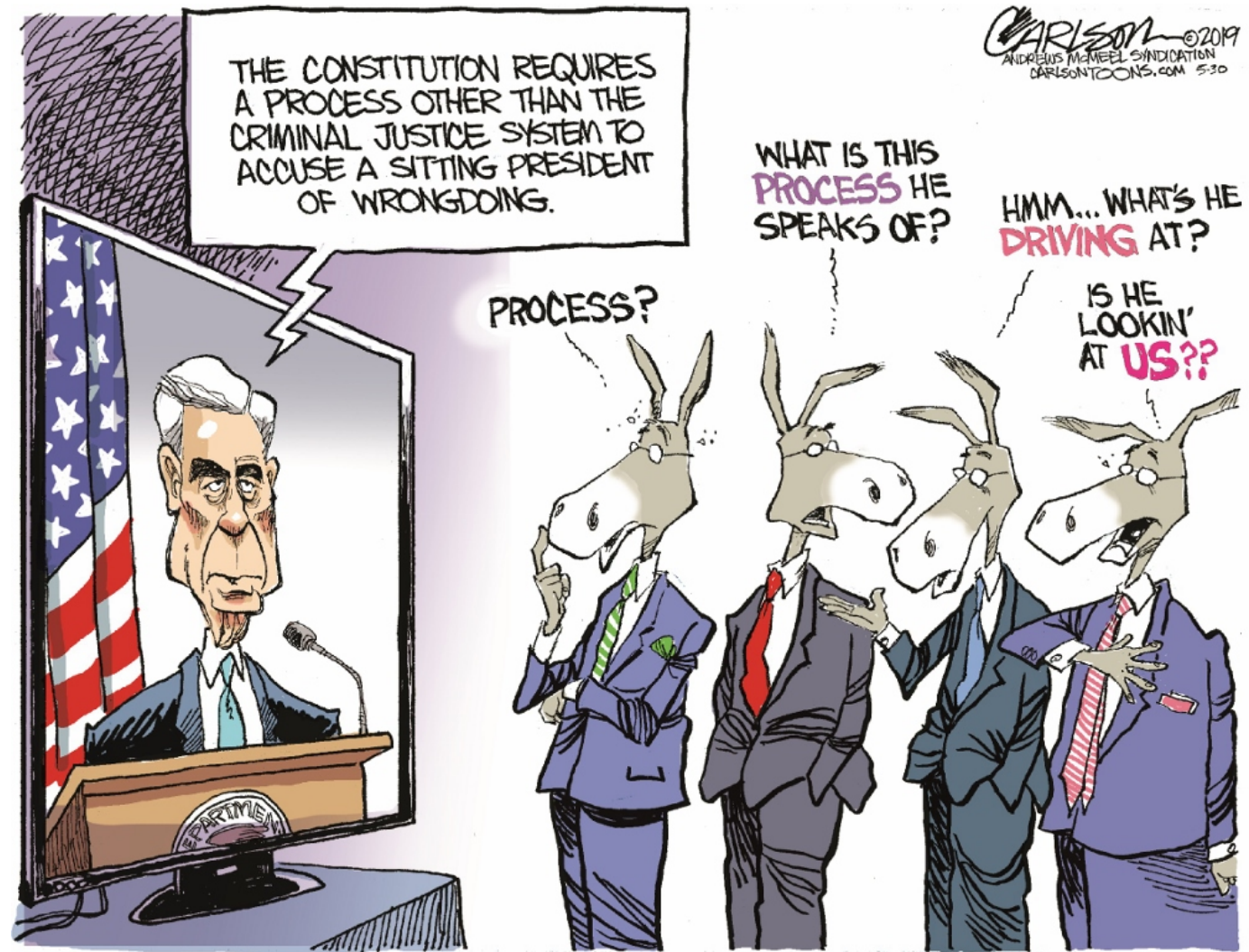
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The report of special counsel Robert Mueller into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential campaign and into Donald Trump, his campaign and the possibility that the president attempted to obstruct justice makes for a really big book. In the raw, it runs to 448 pages. Pick up an edition that includes commentary and timelines and bios of important figures of the investigation, and the whole thing could run to more than 700 pages.

In an age of tweets, sound bites and endless panels of talking heads squeezed among commercials, the Mueller report can come off as a quaint anachronism, something that might have been a big deal when people cared about such things, had time to actually think about the importance of such matters, and received their news from calm voices rather than exploding heads.

Perhaps it is all the distractions that have resulted in it seeming as if the report has quickly faded in importance, overwhelmed by subsequent "news" cycles. Or perhaps it is that enough of what it contains has made it to the public ether by way of people who have actually read it that we realize it is a frightening document. So frightening, we'd rather not think about it.

It paints a deeply disturbing picture. It details what Mueller, in his only public statement about the investigation, described as the "central allegation" of the grand jury's indictments: "Russian intelligence officers who are part of the Russian military launched a concerted attack on our political system."

With what served as a virtual shout for the remarkably neutral and contained Mueller, he repeated the allegation at the end of his brief comments, asserting a rare, unqualified opinion: "And that allegation deserves the attention of every American."

It is a debate without end or resolution whether Mueller should testify before Congress and whether he can or should be forced to do so. What is undebatable is what he's already presented — a 448-page work that it is the business of Congress to act upon. No further testimony, however delicious it might be to hear the retired special counsel detail the inner workings of the two-year investigation, is needed for lawmakers to move forward.

The fact that a hostile power "launched a concerted attack" on the foundation of our democracy should be enough to raise extreme alarm throughout the land. Yet barely a "What are we doing about it?" creeps into the national conversation.

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Nor, it appears, is there anything near the degree of concern one might imagine when Mueller states: "If we had had confidence that the president clearly did not commit a crime, we would have said so."

There is hardly another way to put that without saying, "We have every reason to suspect that the president may have committed a crime."

The documentation for that assertion is abundant, even preponderant. But all of the work was essentially brushed aside by the shallow and dismissive four-page

summary by Attorney General William Barr and the drumbeat of juvenile tweets by the president.

The question for the culture seems to be whether the leaders and the body politic yet have the stomach for considering serious work in all its details or whether we've permanently conceded that the serious business of governance just takes too much time, too much cooperation and too much attention to detail.

Mueller has done his work. Trump keeps tweeting. And it seems that the future of our democratic institutions and the rule of law depends on whose version of the truth prevails.

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