



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Meredith Rovine  
rovinem@law.upenn.edu

**Ad Hoc Group of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law (CERL) and  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)  
Issues Report Sharply Critical of U.S. Attorney General William Barr and DOJ Activities**

*A nonpartisan legal and ethics group calls for an impeachment inquiry after its in-depth study;  
group concludes Barr compromised U.S. interests, jeopardized national security*

October 12, 2020 (Philadelphia) —The Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law (CERL) Ad Hoc Working Group, in partnership with Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), released today its “Report on the Department of Justice and the Rule of Law under the Tenure of Attorney General William Barr,” a 267-page comprehensive report based on an extensive study of Barr’s and DOJ practices and policies since Barr’s confirmation in 2019.

“For the United States to remain a ‘government of laws, and not of men,’ it is essential that our nation’s highest law enforcement office maintains independence from partisan politics and the executive branch,” said Ad Hoc Working Group Co-Chair Claire Finkelstein, Penn Law professor and Faculty Director of CERL. “After months of study, our group has concluded that Mr. Barr has compromised U.S. interests and jeopardized national security,” she stated. “He has an authoritarian worldview that limits his adherence to the rule of law.”

CERL and CREW undertook the project to examine ethics and rule of law concerns in a number of areas ranging from the Mueller Report rollout to deployment of federal troops against protestors. A bipartisan coalition of national security experts, lawyers, retired military, former acting and deputy attorney generals, and law professors accessed public sources and conducted interviews.

The group concluded that there is sufficient basis for Congress to conduct a detailed impeachment inquiry.

Working Group Co-Chair Richard Painter, Professor of Law at University of Minnesota Law School and former chief White House ethics lawyer under President George W. Bush, said that “not only has the attorney general compromised U.S. interests and national security by, for example, interfering in our government’s Russia and Ukraine investigations, he has simply failed

to enforce the law evenhandedly and has violated rules of professional conduct and government ethics rules. And his defiance of subpoenas and resistance to congressional oversight are problematic.”

The group also believes that Congress and the American people are entitled to immediate answers in the face of strong evidence that the attorney general is subordinating the legitimate work of the DOJ to achieve partisan political aims.

“It’s become apparent that Bill Barr is using his position and the powers of the Justice Department as a vehicle for supporting Donald Trump’s political objectives. This is evident in his attempts to intervene in investigations and prosecutions on behalf of the president’s allies and to help with the president’s bid for re-election,” said Working Group Co-Chair and CREW Executive Director Noah Bookbinder. “Barr’s insistence on pursuing politically-motivated investigations, like the Durham investigation, is clearly intended to justify Trump’s conduct in the 2016 campaign and to provide fodder for his 2020 campaign.”

The areas examined by the group include the rollout of Special Counsel Mueller’s report; DOJ’s involvement in the Ukraine matter; DOJ’s use of counter-investigations and related activities; DOJ’s interference in ongoing investigations and prosecutions; deployment of federal agents and troops against protestors in Portland and Lafayette Square; the firing or reassignment of politically independent government officials; potential suppression of freedom of speech and press; the alleged politicization of DOJ offices; and apparent resistance to congressional oversight and inquiries. The report also provides 13 recommendations.

Other members of the Ad Hoc Working Group are:

**Jennifer Ahearn**, Policy Director of CREW; **Virginia Canter**, former Chief Ethics Counsel at CREW; **George Croner**, a national security senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) and formerly principal litigation counsel at the National Security Agency (NSA); **Stuart Gerson**, former U.S. Acting Attorney General in the Clinton administration and member of Epstein Becker & Green, P.C.; **Richard Meyer**, Interim Executive Director of CERL; **Elizabeth Rindskopf Parker**, former General Counsel to the National Security Agency (NSA) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); and **Shawn Turner**, Professor of Strategic Communications at Michigan State University and a national security communication analyst for CNN.

Consultant:

**Donald B. Ayer**, recently retired partner at Jones Day and the former Deputy Attorney General in the George H. W. Bush administration

To read the full report, including general and specific findings, recommendations, methodology, and more information on members of the Ad Hoc Working Group, please go [here](#).

***The views of the CERL-CREW Ad Hoc Working Group do not necessary reflect those of CERL and its Executive Board and CREW and its Board of Directors.***

**The Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law (CERL)** is a non-partisan interdisciplinary center at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School dedicated to preserving and promoting ethics and the rule of law in national security, warfare, and democratic governance.

[www.pennCERL.org](http://www.pennCERL.org)

**Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)** is a non-partisan nonprofit organization that uses legal action, research, and communications to reduce the influence of money in politics and help foster a government that is ethical and accountable.

[www.citizensforethics.org](http://www.citizensforethics.org)