

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4305

May 17, 2023

Pulitzer Prize Board
2950 Broadway
New York, NY USA 10027

Mrs. Elizabeth Alexander,

In 2018, the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism in National Reporting was awarded to the New York Times and Washington Post for its reports of “Russian connections” to the Trump campaign. After the New York Times and Washington Post received their Pulitzer Prizes, President Trump demanded the board rescind the awards for false reporting. The Pulitzer Prize administrator at the time, Dana Canedy, eventually responded to the President, saying, “This criticism is fake marketing. We stand behind the Pulitzer selection process, which has endured for 103 years. And the winning work speaks for itself.”¹

On May 15, 2023, the Department of Justice (DOJ) released Special Counsel John Durham’s report confirming that these claims of “Russian connections” perpetuated by the New York Times and the Washington Post were in fact, unfounded. The DOJ report also revealed that the FBI neither had plausible evidence nor corroborated intelligence when it launched a destructive investigation against Donald Trump in 2016. The FBI perpetrated this hoax despite knowing it was manufactured by the Clinton campaign, and FBI leadership, including James Comey, Andrew McCabe, and Peter Strzok, knew it was a lie from the outset. During this time, the Clinton campaign paid for computer research to create the false “Russiagate” narrative and continued spying on the White House following President Trump’s election. Despite this revelation, the New York Times and Washington Post have stuck by their “reporting” to this day.

This conspiracy was birthed by the Clinton campaign, perpetrated by the FBI, and perpetuated by the New York Times and Washington Post. This unabated abuse of power and the blatant hijacking of our institutions to unseat a duly elected president marks a dark chapter in our political history. It is a shameful betrayal of the people who still believe in the principles of democracy, integrity, and accountability. Anyone involved in this hoax should be harshly reprimanded, not rewarded.

¹ Martin Pengelly. “Trump demands Pulitzer board rescind awards for Russia interference reporting,” *The Guardian*, October 4, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/oct/04/donald-trump-pulitzer-prize-board-russia-new-york-times-washington-post>

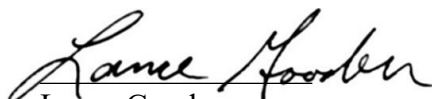
Given that the reporting by the New York Times and the Washington Post was built on a bedrock of lies, there is no reason or basis for this award to stand. In 1981, Pulitzer withdrew a prize to a Washington Post reporter for inaccuracies in a feature and autobiographical report.² Even if this award was bestowed in good faith, the Board is bound by its duty and “mission” to support accurate and responsible journalism. Now that the truth has been revealed, it is imperative that the Board correct this oversight.

The findings of the Durham report made clear that President Trump’s claims of being framed by his political opponents were not unfounded. While this comes as no surprise to those who have called out the FBI’s authority being abused and weaponized for political purposes, this recent revelation has further eroded the public’s trust in our institutions and the fourth estate. To maintain a system of accountability with an unbiased and upright media, people should be able to place their trust confidently in established media outlets for well-researched, well-informed, and verified reporting. Thus, this clear and continuous lapse of fundamental reporting standards by the Washington Post and New York Times should be condemned, not celebrated.

If Pulitzer still believes in maintaining the integrity of its establishment and high standards for its prizes and award recipients, it should promptly undo this mistake by stripping the New York Times and the Washington Post of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize. To restore faith in the authenticity of the prize and to clarify the Board’s strong belief in accountability and impartiality, I request the Board ban the Washington Post and the New York Times from any nominations for a minimum of five years.

I trust you will do the right thing.

Sincerely,


Lance Gooden
Member of Congress

² “The Prize that Taints the Pulitzer’s Ethics and Honor,” *History News Network*, April 20, 2018.
<https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/168815>