

The Mueller Report Could Get Buried, Unless We Demand It, Nonprofits Say

By Sarah E. Kiser

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The long awaited report by special counsel Robert Mueller is anticipated to be completed soon after almost two years, but that might not make any difference to the public if the report is buried by Trump appointed Attorney General William Barr from citizens and even Congress. That is why advocacy groups are urging North Carolinians to contact their senators and representatives in support of a new bill currently sitting in the Senate that could ensure the public release of the entire report.

“As taxpayers, who paid for this investigation, we deserve to see this report. We need to urge senators Tillis and Burr to support new legislation that would ensure the public release of the report” Susana Hailey with Law Works NC said, opening the town hall with about 40 attendants.

Mueller’s investigation, going on almost two years now, is a federally appointed position to investigate into anyone affiliated with Donald Trump’s presidential campaign engaging in criminal collusion or conspiracy with Russia. Thus far, the investigation has resulted in at least thirty-four known indictments including Paul Manafort, Trump’s presidential campaign chair, who was sentenced to almost four years of prison for financial fraud and Michael Cohen who received three years imprisonment for campaign-finance violations and lying to Congress.

Progress NC Action, Law Works NC, and Triangle-area Indivisible groups invited the residents of Raleigh to a talk lead by legal, political, and media experts. Pressley M. Millen, Trial attorney at Womble Bond Dickinson explained the regulations behind a special counsel investigation, and Chuck Tryon, Professor of Film and Media studies at Fayetteville State University explained how Russia used American styled ads, memes, and slang to misinform and suppress votes, and he expressed fears for 2020. Without the full report, the country may never know to what extent Team Trump engaged in criminal collusion during the election.

The town hall focused on encouraging people to contact their senators to pressure them to listen to constituents who want the full Mueller report to be made public when it is completed. [A Washington Post-Schar School](#) poll found that 81% of American adults think the report should be published, including 79% of Republicans. The presenting coalitions cite a PBS survey that found that 75% of Americans are in favor of releasing the document. As it stands, when Mueller finishes his report, the regulations state that he is to send it to the Attorney General of the United States,

William Barr, who before his swearing in promised to allow Mueller to complete his investigation. What he avoided promising to do is to make the full report or partial report available to the public or to Congress.

By law, he does not have to, Paige Travis working with Protect the Investigation explained. “William Barr makes a decision about what gets sent to Congress.” But he may send none of it. That would be an unprecedented move, but one the coalitions feel the need to prepare for with the investigation thought to concluding soon.

Barr is only required to give Congress and the public a summary, Travis said “So he can just say ‘the report has been received, period. Or ‘the report has been received. These are the amount of people that have been indicted.’ So it can be really vague.”

A solution to that fear has already been introduced in Congress. S 236, or the Special Counsel Transparency Act would ensure that the public will receive the entire report with minor redactions, but it is unlikely that the bill will make it through the republican-controlled Senate.

That’s where the constituents come in.

“Any decision about what should be done about what’s found will be kicked over to Congress, and it’s very clear that the Congress is reacting to public opinion,” Gerrick Brenner with Progress NC Action said.

The organizers are calling for North Carolinians to contact their representatives and Senators Thom Tillis and Richard Burr. On Tuesday, a group will meet at Highland United Methodist Church to write letters to members of Congress and local newspapers. And on March 26, in downtown Raleigh there is planned a march from the Capitol to Senator Tillis’ office to get a promise of action from him.

The response from citizens has been encouraging, Faisal Khan with Mueller Watch and Progress NC Action said.

“More people stay engaged,” Khan said. “More people understand that this is not a Democratic issue. This is not a Republican issue. This is an American issue. It should be a concern to all of us”

But the response from the state’s senators is less enthusiastic. Last week Tillis was handed a petition with three thousand signatures urging him to support SB 236.

“We don’t get much response from the senators,” he said. “Here in Raleigh, they don’t even come to the door to take our petitions.”

A nationwide effort, Khan said, is essential to getting the transparency bill through Senate. He could not go into specifics but said that groups in Alaska, Iowa, and Arizona are also advocating for this cause.