

[Jane Hall:](#)

Hello and welcome to American Forum Café, a podcast production of the School of Communication at American University in Washington DC. I'm Jane Hall, I'm an associate professor here at SOC. I teach courses on politics in the media and advanced reporting. Before coming to AU I was a journalist covering the news media for many years in New York. In my Politics in the Media class we look at the intersection of contemporary politics and media coverage, and boy are politics and the media intersecting. Colliding, actually, and influencing each other. As part of my class students have the opportunity to participate in American Forum Town Halls and one on one conversations with journalists, political strategists, politicians, and other important players. My students in Advanced Reporting also play an important role in our programs. They are interviewing other college students about our topics as well as asking our guests questions during our events.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Recently, Congressman Steve Cohen, Democrat from Tennessee spoke with my classes and other students at AU. What you'll hear on this episode is the recording from that event. Congressman Cohen is best known for introducing Articles of Impeachment last year against Donald Trump. With the Democrats winning a majority in the House of Representatives impeachment had become a real possibility. And Congressman Cohen is chair of an important subcommittee on the House Judiciary Committee where impeachment could begin. He is playing an important role in other committees as well. He is the first Jewish Congressman from Tennessee, as well as he represents a majority black district.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I start by asking Congressman Cohen about impeachment and the Mueller report and he made news with us here talking about the Democrats' strategy on impeachment and whether he agreed with it. It's not what you might think.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Congressman Cohen also is leading in legislation on gun control, climate change, and immigration. And our students asked him about all of these topics.

[Jane Hall:](#)

We also talked about whether Congress can ever be bipartisan, the 2020 presidential election, and his views on the new freshman class in Congress. At the end of the program, Congressman Cohen speaks movingly to students about what it meant to him to be Southern and Jewish in the home of the Civil Right's Movement.

[Jane Hall:](#)

So, thank you for listening, and I hope you enjoy this episode of American Forum Café. Our conversation with Tennessee Democrat Steve Cohen.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I think what I've got to ask you is first, do you think we are at a historic moment in Congress and the presidency, and what is it like to be in Congress today with everything that's going on? So do you think we're at a historic moment?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

There's no question we are at a historic moment. There has never been a person like Donald Trump serving in an executive capacity anywhere probably in the United States ever. In my highest estimation I would say he is the least

informed, least knowledgeable, least intelligent, least gracious, least civil, least equipped, most egotistical, most narcissistic person ever to have a position in the federal government. So we're at a serious crisis because he does not believe in the rule of law, which is what we're respected for all over the globe. We travel as Congresspeople in what's called CODELL's, which is an acronym for Congressional Delegation. And whenever we go somewhere people say they value United States because of our judiciary and our appreciation for the rule of law. This many has no appreciation for the rule of law, he has no appreciation for the judiciary, and he has no appreciation for the free press, which is something else that we're admired for. So yeah, we're at a crucial time and to survive two years has been amazing.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

To survive another two is going to be, we'll have to see what happens, but it's a major time in our country's history. Today Congressman Jamie Raskin made some reference to Nancy Pelosi, alluded to her in whip meeting, and he apparently conjured up one of the founding fathers, didn't designate which. It might have been Thomas Payne, I think it was Thomas Payne. He said, "Time has found you at the right moment." That was during the revolutionary period, and this is the same time. This is a historic moment for Congress and for our country to get through this addled Presidency.

[Jane Hall:](#)

You introduced articles of impeachment against President Trump last year, before the Democrats gained control of the House in the 2018 midterms. Tell us why you did that then, and what do you think should happen now?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I never thought Donald Trump should be President. As I said, I think he is the worst human being on the globe. I was in New York one time doing Chris Hayes' show on MSNBC and there were all these helicopters buzzing outside. And I looked and I expected to see King Kong up there, reaching at the Chrysler Building, but they were all hovering because Trump had done something, it was about Trump University and the law suits had started to come in. And I just thought, "I never want to see that man. I never want to be in his presence," because I had a great uncle named Morris Shapiro. And Uncle Morris said, "Never put your head in a lion's mouth." Now, he was right. And Donald Trump is a lion's mouth. You don't want to get near somebody like that. And then he ends up getting elected President.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I didn't go to his inauguration because I didn't think he deserved it. I thought he was an illegitimate President, that's what John Lewis says. John Lewis is one of my hero's and one of my colleagues and friends. And John was one of the first people to say he wasn't going to go, and then I said I wasn't going to go. And several other people didn't.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I've not met the man, I don't plan to meet the man. He's not worthy of being met. You reach out your hand in friendship to show you don't have a weapon. His weapon is in his mouth, and another orifice. No reason to deal with such a person.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I wanted to put articles of impeachment in immediately, very early, but I held off because Nancy Pelosi wanted us to hold off. I held off and I held off, and then Brad Sherman put something in for obstruction of justice for his actions with Comey, that Russia thing, then I decided to do it. I conjured up all of the nerve that I had in me to call Nancy Pelosi and tell her what I was doing. And I said, "I'm going to call Nancy." And I got out my phone, it was right after Charlottesville, and that was end.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Tell us how that was the end.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well he said, "There were fine people on both sides." Klansman and Neo Nazis. My district is majority black, it's the second blackest district in the country. My constituents are great people, and they elect me in great numbers, and I appreciate them. And regardless of that the Klan is awful and they were awful to my constituents, they weren't real great with Jews either. And then the Neo Nazis, they made us first. They singled us out as the chosen people. So for him to say there were fine people on both sides was anathema to me and it was the line to cross.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So I called Nancy, I got out my phone and punched it and was ready to tell her I was going to file my articles of impeachment and I got her answering service, and I thought, "Great!" And I left her a message.

[Jane Hall:](#)

What, that I'm filing article of impeachment?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

That's exactly right. And we worked and we got 17 cosponsors, which was the most you can get. Nobody else got any cosponsors. It wasn't going to go anywhere, but an expression that I used to hear when I went to Vanderbilt among some of my colleagues, "Flying your freak flag." And I did it. I just had to make a statement because the guy was just reprehensible, the conduct was reprehensible, we filed on obstruction of justice, on emoluments foreign, emoluments domestic, abuse of process dealing with the press, and abuse of process dealing with the judiciary, which included part and power. So we decided to do it in August, we filed it in November of 2017, and that's kind of where we're at.

[Jane Hall:](#)

What do you think should happen now? Should Congress proceed with that and what do you think will happen?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

The leadership of the Democratic Caucus, Nancy Pelosi, Steney Hoyer, Jim Klobern and company don't want us to proceed with it now. The company line is, and that filters down to the chairman, Jerry Nadler is the chairman of Judiciary, and I'm under him as a chairman of a subcommittee. To get something scheduled, the chairman's going to have to schedule it and the chairman's going to have to have approval from the Speaker and the leadership. They believe that we should wait until the Mueller report has been made public. We don't know how much of it will be made public, and we don't what it'll say. It could be kind

of a dud. It could just say, "I indicted X Y Z, the 13 Russians, the Manafort, the Flynn, the whoever and we got the guilty pleas, et cetera, and the jury verdict. We decline to indict so and so and so and so." Maybe none of them are Trumps because of justice department policy that you can't indict the President. But he might have a few folks he chose. That could be it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Then he could put a lot of flesh onto it. He could go into a more in depth report. We don't know. But they want to wait and see what he has. And even if we don't get anything from there, we can subpoena Robert Mueller and we can subpoena the report and get the information hopefully. Of course the administration will fight it and say, "It's executive privilege." But they want to hold off til we get more information. Their logic, the method to their madness, is that while they have no more love for Trump than I have, they realize, which is true, that to impeach him, which is possible, with the majority in the House now of Democrats, to convict him you've got to have two thirds of the Senate. And right now you could get probably most of the Democrats, I mean you might have an issue with Mansion and maybe a couple of others, Doug Jones might have a tough time with it politically.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But the Republicans you probably get nobody. There are a few people over there that talk pretty good. I always compare it, the last Congress Bob Corker from my state talked pretty good. Ben Sasse talks pretty well. Jeff Flake talked well. Jeff's my friend, Corker's my friend. Have any of y'all seen the play or the movie "Chorus Line?" There's a dancer in there, and the song that she does is "Dance Ten Looks Three." And those guys are talk ten, vote one. If that. They voted for every reprehensible judge. They voted for all of his reprehensible cabinet members but they talked good, but they wouldn't vote for something. And even Mitt Romney doesn't look like he's going to be much better of a voter. He's going to be more of a talker.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So unless we can get a conviction in the Senate, what are we doing? We're not going to get him out, we're not going to be successful, and you've got to build up a case to the American people. And the idea is if we get more information from Mueller and more information from our investigations, which the Judiciary Committee will be having robust hearings. We've hired as consultants Norm Ison, who's the head of CREW, which is Citizens for Responsible Ethics in Washington, sounds like an oxymoron, but it's not. And a guy named Barry Burke who is a criminal attorney, well respected, to be our consultants. And pretty soon, there's going to be an announcement of what they're doing, but it's going to be like a major effort to move information from other sources to us, and the beginning of taking that information, gleaned the right facts from it, and proceeding in committees on emoluments on obstruction and on other issues. It won't necessarily be impeachment, it'll be the requisite elements of impeachment.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And if we can build a case through those investigations and processes and Mueller's report and get the American public more behind us and get some

Senators behind us, then maybe it'll be time to go for impeachment. That's the Pelosi approach. That's probably the right approach, I agree with it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Meanwhile I have annotated and continue to my impeachment articles to keep them up to date, just in case there's another Charlottesville and I say, "I've had enough of it." And the flag goes up again.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Well there's a couple of things I want to follow up on. Is the thinking, are the conventional thinking of Pelosi and others that basically you would be reelecting Donald Trump or electing President Pence if you moved forward? Is that the thinking?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I think that's the thinking that impeachment would help Trump, it would get his base energized even more. And they may be right about that, I don't know. He's got 35% that he's going to have whether he shoots the person on Fifth Avenue or not. We're going to have, I think we've got over 50%. But we had 52% or something like that with Hillary. We had 50 point something with Al Gore Junior. So you've got to get the electoral votes. It might energize his base and get them fired up.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It was really strange, and I think Michael Cohen was right, when he said towards the end of his testimony, "This Presidency will not end peacefully."

[Jane Hall:](#)

That's a very frightening idea. He said, did you all hear that? He said he was fearful there would not be a peaceful transition of power.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Yeah I mean Trump, a lot of his supporters, and I see them. Because I put out a lot of commentary that's not such that the Trump people would like it. Most of them, I don't think they understand. But what they do understand, they don't like. I removed a thorn from one of their paw's one day, anyways. They have said, "You think you're going to impeach the President, there will be a revolution." And they all love their guns. The second amendment is their favorite amendment.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Sometimes I worry that our media are so polarized and the politics are so polarized, people have commented on that of course, that maybe the Russia investigation and the Mueller report isn't really resonating or that it will be perceived as well it's on the one hand, on the other hand. Are your constituents talking about this? Do they know about the Mueller report? Do they care about the Russia investigation?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

My constituents do. I hear from certain politicians and you hear they say, "Oh my folks don't talk about the Russia and they don't talk about Mueller report and they don't talk about impeachment, they want to know about healthcare and they want to know about education and they want to know about job training and they want to know about jobs." And that's all true to a lot of people. There are a lot of people that need all of those things, and that's part of

our Democratic agenda, the major issues we ran on. But my constituents know about Donald Trump and they hate him.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Now one of the largest ethnic groups that is against Trump would be African Americans. They do not like Trump and my district is majority African American. It's 60%, so when I go to the grocery store, when I go out in the city, and my constituents come up to me, they say, "Keep giving him hell. Don't you lay off of him a minute." And they know what he's about and they like what I do, and they know it. That's the issue. They don't talk about I need a job, I need healthcare, I need job training. A few people do. It's secondary, Trump is the major issue.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Then my more white liberal base, which Memphis does have such a thing. They know it too, and they can't stand Trump. Now they talk about solar and they talk about wind and I'm on the New Green Deal and they talk about that and all those nice issues. But they talk about Trump as well.

[Jane Hall:](#)

All right, I'm going to attempt to go into the audience and see how this goes. So excuse me a moment.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Sure.

[Jane Hall:](#)

All right.

[Rivera, S.:](#)

Hi, my name is Santiago Rivera and I am junior, I study political science and journalism. My question regards immigration. So over the last few years immigration has been rising in the minds of Americans as one of the biggest issues. I know over the summer we saw probably one of the biggest human rights abuses of the Trump administration. So my question to you is, what can we expect in terms of bipartisan immigration legislation that protects the security, the safety, and the legal constitutional rights of asylum seekers, migrants, and other immigrants?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well good question and that is an important issue to a lot of folks and it's important to the Democratic constituency. Bipartisan is going to be tough. I mean there are some folks, we had a bipartisan group to try to get the gang of six or whatever they called it, the gang of eight. And they couldn't come up with a bill, a few years back. We'd like to extend protections to the DACA kids and to others here with special protection, special status, but I don't know if the Republicans will go for it. Trump probably wouldn't sign anything. Trump wants to say that, I think he has the DACA kids as a hostage. Like when we discussed during the shut down and in the shut down and he offered like a six months or nine months, a temporary effort, and we said we're not going to do a temporary thing. We want a permanent fix and he would do that. He said he wanted to hold that for some bigger deal.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So he doesn't care about people, he cares about having them as hostages, just like he had the federal employees. He wants to hold out for some grand deal, I

don't know what it'll be. But he won't sign a bill or do anything unless it's part of something more major than that.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

The DACA kids who have been here in this country and born here, not born here but came here, should be able to stay. And a lot of them in my district are some of the best students and unfortunately in my state, they can't get in state tuition, and they can't get scholarships that are provided for other kids that have a 3.0 grade average and get a scholarship to college, they can't get that. So we're taking some of the best students and potential leaders and we're sending them to out of state or we're putting them in unbelievable debt.

[Jeffrey:](#)

Hi Congressman, thank you for coming. I'm Jeffrey, senior, public relations student. And I have that student debt question that you brought up earlier. So basically, a lot of the new Dems on the left wing of the party have been moving the conversation towards tuition free education, and as somebody who has clearly made education a big priority in your career, I was wondering where in that conversation you stand.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well Jeffrey, as you probably read in my bio, I passed the Tennessee State Education Lottery. I worked on it for 20 years. Introduced in 1984, and they sold the first ticket in 2004. Tough state, a river was going to go back to the north, locusts were going to descend, all kinds of awful things were going to happen. Marijuana wasn't going to get you high. It was going to be terrible times in Tennessee. But we passed it and it gives kids money to go to college. I just don't think it should cost you an arm and a leg to go.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I sponsored a bill and have sponsored for several Congresses that if you need to file bankruptcy that you can bankrupt a private student loan, which right now you cannot bankrupt a private student loan. You can bankrupt a car note, you can bankrupt all kind of other debts that you have, but private student loans are not allowed to be bankrupted. That's not right, and if you have indeed a need, you should take advantage of bankruptcy and get a clean start. Not just as a way to get out of school, and wipe your debt out for no reason. But if you can show it, so that bill maybe has a better chance of life because we've got a Democratic majority. Republicans basically are not supportive of debtors. They're supportive of users. Shy locks. That's their base. So they're not interested in helping people with student loans but we're going to try to do it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

As far as free college and all that, eventually we will probably, we'll get there, it's going to happen, but it'll probably start with community college. How do you determine Harvard is X amount of money and some other school, Baltimore City College is X amount money. Is it fair to pay everything? I don't know, I don't know. But thank you Jeffrey.

[Williams, C.:](#)

Hi, thank you for being here today. I'm Camille Williams, studying natural resources and sustainable development. I wanted to know, with Trump's ambitious trade deal, specifically with Mexico and Canada, what do you think

Congress can do to help small scale farmers, particularly those that are facing climate irregularities?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well Trump has already, because China he gave the soybean folks a bunch of money. I guess that's all right, I thought it was kind of a political use of funds and taking care of his base. I didn't really particularly like it. But he can give subsidies to folks like he did with the soybean people if there's difference, but I don't know what's in the agreement. Is there any particular parts of that NAFTA, whatever they call it now, Mexico Canada Trump, MCT or whatever it is agreement, that affects farmers in an adverse way to what we have now?

[Williams, C.:](#)

Specifically with like corn, maize, etho-noil, and with US dairy, they have opened Canada's dairy product to come in to US trade, so small scale dairy farmers, those who produce maize, those would be affected. Then I think he also has a certain percentage of automobiles have to have a certain percentage of parts and oil that comes from Mexico now. So different types of maize grower and people who would maybe help make alternative energy for cars, they would be affected.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I'm not really that familiar with it. From what I understand, we already had those provisions in the law, and I think his new proposal, I'd be shocked if he would have a proposal that would make it more difficult on dairy farmers and farmers because that's his base, but I don't know what he's done, I haven't looked at it.

[Alex Russo:](#)

Hi, my name is Alex Russo, I am a second year student here at AU majoring in political science. I am the vice president of ZBT here at AU, along with vice president of AU Dems.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Alpha Gamma chapter.

[Alex Russo:](#)

Beta Si chapter.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Thank you.

[Alex Russo:](#)

So my question is, as you talk about impeachment and the Green New Deal, how are you overcoming polarization because yes Democrats ran in 2018 on holding Trump accountable, but how do you do the work of governing?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well it's all a majority. There's certain areas where we're bipartisan. Transportation Committee which I'm on, is generally bipartisan. Veteran's issues are generally bipartisan. There are a few other places we come together. Israel is oftentimes, although there are differences now with the APAC world, the [inaudible 00:23:41] world, and some other world. BDS world, I guess. So there's a few different worlds, but mostly it's pretty divided, and you get one or two Republicans at the most on any bill. So as long as you've got something that's strong with your Democratic colleagues, you can pass it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Now passing it in the Senate is a different issue, and it's going to be tough to pass anything in the Senate. Mitch McConnell's not going to want to pass anything at all except judges. He's going to try to get as many of those as possible.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

What we're doing now is kind of setting an agenda for 2021, and kind of saying, "Here's the promise land, what we pass." This week we passed HR8 which is background checks on gun sales, across the board. Today we passed something we called the Charleston Loophole, where that roof racist got his gun and shouldn't have gotten it. It was five days and they found out that he shouldn't have gotten his gun and he had it and he did his terrorist act. So we tried to change that today. We passed a bill.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Will they get any life in the Senate? I doubt it. I think what Mitch McConnell is going to come back with is some really minor thing. Now they've had eight years, they could have done something, and they have done nothing. So they'll come back with something to kind of defend themselves. But we're going to show what can be done if we have a Democratic Senate and a Democratic President. Bills like that. Next week, John Sarbanes is going to bring HR1 which deals with transparency in government, it deals with ethics, it deals with campaign finance reform, it deals with being against gerrymandering, it deals with extending the voting rights act again, renewing the Voting Rights Act. Those are important issues. And we're going to try to pass something on prescription drugs. But whether they get anywhere in the Senate is another issue. They may do something on prescription drugs, they're not going to do too much to help the ACA, they might some the high risk quarters could use some help, and maybe they'll help fund them. But Trump has shown not a lot of, anything Obama was for he's against, and it's just sad.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

There's some ideas the Democrats have, the New Green Deal, et cetera, which is more aspirational. It was a resolution, it wasn't legislation. But it's trying to focus attention on the need for climate change legislation and I went to the Munich Security Conference weekend a-

[Steve Cohen:](#)

... and I went to the Munich Security Conference a weekend ago, and we were almost the laughing stock. People couldn't believe Trump. They couldn't believe we got out of the Paris climate accords. They couldn't believe we got out of the JCPOA. The world is pretty united on the Iran nuclear deal and on the Paris climate accords, and we're out of both of 'em. And the INF, given the Russians, getting out of that, and that was a mistake too. People don't understand it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I'll tell you how bad Trump has become, how this poison has kind of seeped down in places you don't even think about. I had a book that somebody sent, we had all kind of books sent to us. And this one was a little small book, kinda like the green The Little Engine That Could. And it was a plastic kind of whatever, cover, not too many pages, lots of pictures and big print. And I looked at it a little bit and it was about Trump and it looked kinda like it was a kid's book, and it was a kid's book. Somebody wrote it for kids. On swearing in day,

little girl comes in, I'm on a seat on the aisle and she sits in the aisle, she's a cute little girl and I reach my hand down and I say, "Hi, I'm Steve." And she says whatever her name was, which I didn't remember.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And then two hours later I'm leaving the chamber and this little girl's there, coming up to my waist and she goes, "Hi Steve." And I just thought, "Wow, she remembered my name. That's pretty cool." And I was just kind of stunned, I didn't look and I didn't catch who her mother was. So we research and I figure out who her mother was and her mother's Mikie Sherrill, a freshman from Pennsylvania. And I got this book and I signed it to her daughter, Merritt, found out her name was Merritt. And I said, "To Merritt, nice to have met you, Steve." And I give it to her mother to give to her. And her mother was thrilled and it was a nice thing to give her this book and it was all nice and good.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And then she came in today, Tuesday I guess in session, or Wednesday, Wednesday in session. And she came in and she said, "Did you read that book? Did you read that book?" And I guess I lied, I skimmed it. And I said, "Yes, yes I did." And she said, "Well Merritt was reading it this weekend, she got to a part about shit hole countries." And then she kept reading and she got into golden showers. I said, "Give me that book." And she said her little brother said, "Let me read that book."

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So Trump has affected us in ways we don't even imagine.

[Jane Hall:](#)

We have a question over here.

[Alexis Soto:](#)

Thank you congressman. My name is Alexis Soto, here at American University on the broadcast journalism track and-

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Are you Juan Soto's brother?

[Alexis Soto:](#)

No. No.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

He hits pretty good.

[Alexis Soto:](#)

Really?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

You don't know him?

[Alexis Soto:](#)

No, no.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

He's the new Bryce Harper.

[Alexis Soto:](#)

Really? Didn't really care but thank you about that. I don't really keep up with that world but I have a question about 2020, the democratic primary, which I'm sure a lot of people here are very interested in. And it's kind of a two-fold question. For one, I'm actually kind of curious about what you think the lessons

that were learned from 2016 as far as how to handle Donald Trump and how to go up against him. And whether or not you feel that this time that the party will nominate a moderate or a progressive candidate?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I don't know what we learned. And it depends who we nominate. We've got 20 some odd people running. And they run the gamut. And you've got the folks like the Bernies and the Elizabeth Warrens and I guess Kamala Harris who think that the more liberal, you'll get your base out and you'll win by getting your base out. And I tend to agree with that. I don't think that, I've never thought that the Trump thing was that big of a problem. I think the election's gonna be about Trump. It's not gonna be about the ACA, it's not gonna be about a ... It's gonna be about Trump. And if you can stomach Trump, or you like Trump, that's one group. And the other group's gonna be the people that can't stomach him. And I think it's gonna be a landslide.

[Jane Hall:](#)

A landslide for the dems?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Yeah, for the dems. He doesn't get over 42%, he never has and I don't see him getting there. You know, a moderate ... There's something to be said about a moderate. But then that's gonna weaken a lot of the millennials. And then if you end up with the mistake of 2016, which was Jill Stein and the mistake of 2000, which was Ralph Nader, you get a third party candidate and it could be the Starbucks guy and that's crazy. We've seen it twice, the third party candidate has taken votes from our democratic nominee and elected Bush W and Donald. So whoever it is, there are a lot of good candidates, they're all my friends. Whichever one wins, they're gonna be my friend.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Are you endorsing anybody?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Not gonna for a long time. I think I ... A lot of people I like a lot. And I would say, among the people that I like a lot is Sherrod Brown, who is a populist, progressive, smart, no airs about him, good guy. Ohio, Midwest. All those things are really important. He's one of my ... I like, everybody likes Joe Biden. He's a little old. Even from my perspective.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Do you think we should quit asking whether America's ready for a woman president? Or should the dems be worried about what happened with Hilary Clinton on the misogyny and that front?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

There was a lot of that on her front but she did get 52% of the vote. So the American people-

[Jane Hall:](#)

So can we quit asking whether a woman can be elected president?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Yeah. A woman can be elected, it's just can we get through an election and not have it stolen from us by the Russians stealing e-mails and putting them out on WikiLeaks through Roger Stone and Donald Trump and Junior and deals in the

Trump Tower with the Russians. I mean it was, it's definitely Russian conspiracy with the campaign. And when it's found out, all these people that support him, many of 'em are veterans, his supporters, I hope they're embarrassed to hell because they're supporting the most traitorous person we've ever had in the White House.

[Jane Hall:](#)

It's hard to take that in, actually. I think that's one of the problems. Yes, question over there?

[Jordan Bell:](#)

Hi, good evening Congressman Cohen. My name is Jordan Bell, I'm a second year student here at AU studying business, as well as the treasurer of College Republicans. I had a question.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I kind of thought after I heard business that that was gonna come.

[Jordan Bell:](#)

Yeah. Fair enough. Fair enough. Question regarding energy policy, specifically the Green New Deal which I understand you're a co-sponsor of. Had a question about a recent study by the American Action Forum, which found the costs of the proposed Green New Deal potentially tallying between 53 and 93 trillion dollars over ten years. I wanted to know if you believe this issue justifies that cost to the American taxpayer. And if not, or if you're not able to get the votes for it, what aspects of the bill would be your priority to address first if you, for instance, had to split it up into multiple bills?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well I don't know the group that you're talking about, I don't know anything about their figures. I know that the proposal would cost a lot of dollars. Trillions, gazillions, whatever. And it's a proposal. And a lot of it, the idea of cattle and dairy, that's hooey. In fact, on my way up here to I went to [Waxell's 00:33:23], they have the bacon I like. I get ten packages of bacon. We're not gonna have any problems having bacon and hamburgers. Not gonna happen. But we do have to start looking at solar. We have to look non-carbon sources of energy. There's no such thing as clean coal. We need to try preserve our environment. And y'all will be the ones who are gonna see it. When the environment's really going to hell, I'm gonna be rotting.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So y'all are gonna live with it. That's as serious as marijuana and student debt to y'all. Because we are destroying the environment. And there's gonna be oceans rise and the climate change is gonna produce, in different parts of the world, drought and famine, and there will be wars, et cetera. So I think we need to do everything we can to try to get to more renewables, less carbon footprint. I thought that what we did ... And some of these folks who are for it, I admire them for trying to emphasize the issue and put it on the front burner, and they're right to do that, but when some of 'em say, "Nobody's done this before." I was in congress in 2010, we voted for a carbon bill that cost us largely the congress for eight years. And a lot of people made that vote and they lost. So you're not ... Some of the folks who think they're re-inventing the wheel, the wheel's been around and been broken.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But there are things we need to do. High speed rail is great. But we're not gonna have high speed rail that's gonna take cars off the road in great numbers and take airplanes out of the skies, it's just not gonna happen. A lot of it we're gonna have to live with. Peter Emerson back here's one my good friends, and that's why he's here, I guess, but he was telling me ... Oh good, that's a good score. He was telling me last night that the game's over, that they're just putting patch work on. And he's probably right. That we've gone so far with what we've done with carbon emissions that the future's not gonna be wonderful for y'all and climate. It's gonna be hotter and hotter and hotter. And we've had the hottest summers in years, each of the last four years it's been hotter and hotter and hotter. Memphis can get hot, but it's been like New Orleans. It's been real hot. So there's a lot of things we should do and the expense is great but you can also save money.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Solar is something that can save money and can create jobs. And that's what part of the New Green Deal is, is creating jobs there. When you create jobs, put people to work insulating homes. And the idea of insulating and redoing every single building in America, that's right there with cows and getting rid of planes. Not gonna happen. But you can get into some programs where you do try to insulate some people's homes to save energy. So there's a lot that needs to be done.

[Jane Hall:](#)

The legislation on guns that just passed was bipartisan, I mean it had some support, had some support.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Might've had one or two.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Okay.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

That's not- Bi, bi is two.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I mean it passes for bipartisan today. What kind of conversations do you have if you do with your Republican colleagues about things like climate change? Because presumably we all care about the future of our children. I'm just wondering, are there any conversations that go on about ways that the two parties can work together now in this environment? Or do you all just never talk to each other?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

There's a lot of things we work together on. Most of it's not consequential. But today, the hearing I had, first hearing as a constitutional civil rights, civil liberties, it was on the National Emergency Act of 1976. And we had three experts and a lady whose home was on the border. Fifth generation owner of the home, never seen anybody come across the Rio Grande and up the bluff and over her property in all those years. And she doesn't want a big wall to cut off her back yard. We had Professor Johnathan Turley of Georgetown, very conservative Republican, he agreed that the National Emergency Act needs to

be changed to make it specific what an emergency is because it's not defined in the limit and in time and not to have it go on in perpetuity or without redress.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

We had a lady from the Atlantic magazine, a writer, Goitein, and that's where I read her article and it piqued my interest and she had five proposals on a reform that the National Emergencies Act. And we had an attorney named [Gerson 00:38:06] whose working with Lawrence Tribe on a case in the court in El Paso to challenge the declaration of a National Emergency. He's very conservative, Republican, worked for George HW and for George W, they all agreed that the National Emergencies Act is too broad. They differed in ... So they agreed and the people on the panel agreed and we're gonna try to come up with a bill based on this hearing, it was one of the best hearings I've been involved in in 13 years, to reform and make the National Emergencies Act work to where Article I, the congress in charge and not exceeding power or relinquishing power to the executive.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So that's what we'll work on together. And the bills we work on together ... Last year we had a musical modernization act that was bipartisan, there's some things we do. But on the big things like guns, not gonna happen. The NRA owns the other side. And it's not just money.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Maybe you'd better get some water.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It's a lot of money. But it's also ratings. And they all wanna get an A rating. My buddy John Yarmuth put out some buttons, which I used to wear one too, it said F. That was our grade from the NRA, we were proud of it. But they all wanna get an A. So we're not gonna be together on guns.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I don't wanna leave our young people hopeless. I'm coming back to the stage, by the way. I don't wanna leave our young people hopeless here that this is never gonna be different. I'm coming back.[crosstalk 00:39:31]

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It's gonna be different if you vote for democrats and you elect democrats and get a democratic senate and a democratic president.

[Jane Hall:](#)

But there are some Republicans in this world here that-

[Steve Cohen:](#)

There are but in the congress they're voting for terrible judges, they're not voting to protect young people and everybody from people with guns and possible terrorist acts. I mean today they put a motion to recommit up to say ... A motion to recommit's are basically gotcha things, but it said that if you were a victim of spousal abuse that you could get a gun within three days. Well if you're a victim of spousal abuse and you wanna go out and get a gun within three days. You don't wanna use that gun for a good reason. You wanna kill your spouse. That's not good either. But they tried to trick bag us, they didn't get it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Yesterday they trick bagged us on a motion to recommit and they passed it, which was deplorable. But they did it. And what they had was that if somebody tries to get a gun and they find out that they're an illegal immigrant, that they have to be reported to ICE. And that put a lot of people in a tough position. You're for guns, you're against immigrants. And you're handing them over to ICE if that happens. I don't know how many illegal immigrants are gonna go wanna buy a gun, especially with that amendment, but with that amendment it can't pass the senate, it has to come back to the ... It was just a gotcha bill. Just like two weeks ago, we had a bill up saying that we would withdrawal any powers for the funding for the efforts to help the war in Yemen. And they put an amendment on. One of my colleagues, I'm in a strange situation in Memphis, my colleague to my east is also Jewish and he goes to the same temple that I do.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It's probably the only religious sanctuary congregation that has two members of congress, let alone two Jews from Tennessee. I was the first, he's the second. It's been a long time. Give 'em an inch and they'll take two seats. He came up with a proposal that was a trick bag to us to say anti-Semitism, this is right after Congressman Homer and Congressman Talib had made some comments about APAC and influence of money, "Benjamins" on the congress. And it said that anti-Semitism was in our national interest to fight against. And that it was wrong, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And they put that up and they thought we might vote against it to stand in solidarity with our colleagues, who we did not wanna put on the spot or be against but we accepted the amendment and put it on the bill. So they were kind of shocked that we accepted it. I thought it was a smart thing to do. But then once they got the amendment off, which is kind of historic to pass an amendment to say, and my colleague David Kustoff put it on to say anti-Semitism was against our national interests and it was against our values.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

They voted against the bill. So they kind of trick bagged themselves. Because by putting it on, they voted against it. And it's just games. And so it's hard to work with people that play games like that.

[Jane Hall:](#)

You're listening to the American Forum Café, a podcast production of the school of communication at American University in Washington, DC. Our conversation with Congressman Steven Cohen is part of a collaboration with the Kennedy Political Union, a student organization on campus. Our guests on the American Forum have included Anderson Cooper, Jake Tapper, Anita Hill, Marie Elena Selena, prominent political strategist from the Republican and Democratic parties and others. To learn more about the school of communication or to find enrollment information visit our website at [www.soc.american.edu](http://www.soc.american.edu). And now let's return to our conversation with Congressman Steven Cohen.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I wanna mention something, just an aside here, couple of things. One of which is things are getting better in the country. The fact that I'm here is a great indication. The fact that I have ... My district, as I've said, is the second most African-American district in the country. And it's only like one or two-tenths of a percent less African-American than Benny Thompson's. In a primary, my district

is 80% African-American. And I have not lost a precinct running for reelection in a democratic primary. Because in Memphis, Tennessee African-American voters vote based on the content of your character and your work, and not the color of your skin. That's something America should be pretty proud of. And it hasn't been widely noted. But it shows that some place is getting beyond race.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And there have been ... Keith Ellison was from a district in Minneapolis that was 86% Caucasian and he is black and Muslim, and he got elected, about as significantly as I did. And we voted together. And I thought that was a great story but it wasn't as important as Stormy Daniels. I also wanna tell about ... Anybody here ever heard of Perry Wallace? One person's heard of Perry Wallace. Bart you don't count. Perry Wallace went to Vanderbilt about a year or two before I did. He was the first African American basketball player in the Southeastern Conference. Great player. Great human being. Had a tough time at Vanderbilt, wasn't treated well. He spent three years there, thought about leaving at one point because he was discriminated against at college. But he went on, he became an attorney, and he was a professor of law here at American University.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And he died I think maybe just two years ago. He was one of the great people I've ever come in contact with. He was my, what they call a view scepter at Vanderbilt. He was a sophomore and I was a freshman, kind of took me around and taught me about Vanderbilt. He was a great American University prof and you all should read about Perry Wallace. There have been some documentaries done on 'im and there's been a book by a guy named Moranis, great, great representative of American University.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Okay. I think that's very good to know. I wanna ask you one more question and then let's throw it, you all raise your hands and then Mike or Angus will come to you. Do you think that, I mean the prediction is that the Republicans are gonna run against the democrats as socialists, that you will have AOC next to you the way Nancy Pelosi is in all the ads. Do you think that's the case? And how do you think the democrats are gonna ... Is it bad for the democrats to be viewed as socialists or be tarred as socialists? There's a lot of support, as we've learned from Bernie Sanders, for some of those programs. But what do you think the GOP is gonna do? And then what should the dems do?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I don't think it's a good idea, good for us politically to be viewed as socialists. No, I don't think that's good. We're a capitalist country. We can have a more liberal and more ... Social Security's not socialist. But it's American as apple pie. And so are Medicare and Medicaid. We can reform our system without being socialists. And taking over the means of production and all. But we're as guilty as the Republicans in terms of, they ran against Pelosi, and I saw something today on Twitter, I forget what the feed was but underneath it was a split screen and half of it was Nancy and half of it was AOC. So that shows where they're going. But we ran against Newt Gingrich. And we were successful. So there's been all types of people. Republicans ran against Harry Reed and Nancy. Leadership invites, as a target, people run against it. The voters I don't think

really care about that. The people that Nancy Pelosi, they're not democrats, they're gonna vote for Trump anyway.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And the people that hated Paul Ryan weren't gonna vote Republican. And we went after Paul Ryan. I think you just, you nominate your candidate, you get behind him, you get your vote out and you try to make sure that there's not Russian interference and voter intimidation. While I'm on it, I'll just say this about Nancy Pelosi, she's unbelievable. She is smart. She's got unbelievable strength. She is just focused on our democratic majority and our issues. She does not stop. I have worked with lots of ... I spent 24 years in the Tennessee senate with some great legislative leaders, regarded by state legislators as two of the greatest speakers of the senate and the house ever. They're not Nancy Pelosi. She works. She raises money for the party. She knows how to message. She keeps our groups together, the different groups on the street that motivate people. She works the floor.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

If she sees somebody votes wrong on a motion to recommit, she goes and finds them on the floor and tries to change their vote. She's just great. She knows about your family. She knows your issues. She cares about you. She writes notes. She does it all. She is the best. I was so proud to vote for her as my first vote in congress. I was so proud to vote for her this year. And when I did I said, "I cast my vote for the lady who's gonna make the congress great again, Nancy Pelosi." She did it.

[Jane Hall:](#)

You know there's some research that shows that women in congress collaborate more, reach across the aisle more. What impact have you seen from this new year of the woman?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

They're very enthusiastic. They're gonna bring some issues forward, as they have with the New Green Deal and some other issues, and bring attention to issues. And that's admirable. But I think they need to understand the reality. [inaudible 00:49:14] O'Neil said, "You're not a congressman until you're reelected." And so, in your first term you need to ... You can advance issues to save the world, I'm not saying you should abdicate your responsibilities and not talk about climate change and other issues that are of importance. But you need to know the constituent services are important, that coming back is important and once you get a term underneath your belt, a second term, then you're here for awhile.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And a lot of that is helping people out with their Social Security, which is rewarding but it's not glamorous. But that's the stuff that gets you reelected and if you wanna make a difference, you gotta get reelected. And sometimes to get reelected you can't be Plato. You've gotta be a little more Machiavelli. And you gotta know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Other questions? Let's have some more questions.

[Jake:](#)

Hi. My name's Jake. I'm a sophomore studying political science. [inaudible 00:50:03] just spoke my question a little bit but motions to recommit, do you think we should get rid of them overall, other measures that help increase bipartisanship although they can hurt democrats in the long run?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It was brought up today in the caucus whip meeting, whether we should get rid of it. Apparently it's been around forever. But so has the flu. Motions to recommit don't get people together, they're gotcha moves. The Republicans have been much better at them. They passed 48 times, they had motions to recommit that passed when we were in the majority. We had 0 motions to recommit that passed when they were in the majority. They're more of a homogenous group than we are. That's part of it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But also, they just work the game better. The whole purpose of a motion to recommit, even when it passes like the way passed on Anti-Semitism and the one that passed on reporting somebody to ICE, that wasn't really meant to report somebody to ICE, it was meant to kill the bill. And so it was a result the senate won't take it up, we have to re-pass the bill anyway. That was their whole purpose. And their purpose today wasn't to save abused wives from wife beaters, it was to kill the bill. So motions to recommit don't move the government forward, they don't bring the parties together, they invite more angst and more vitreal. And so I think it wouldn't hurt at all to get rid of it. It doesn't really serve a useful purpose. And I don't think that ... I haven't seen them be used.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Some people talk and they say, "Oh we used a motion to recommit to help beat somebody." And sometimes I guess they do because it anecdotally, I've heard it, but I've never seen it. I kind of think if you do your constituent services and you do your congress on your corners and you do your mail, a lot of the things to get elected are things like sending out your congressional calendars, doing tele-town halls, doing the grunt work. I like being on MSNBC and CNN but that's-

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I like being on MSNBC and CNN, and it helps. Celebrity's good, people see you and they respect, they think great, my Congressman's out there and they like what you're doing, but it's the little stuff you do for people. Just saying hello to them and seeing them and being a regular person that counts. It's not all this stuff being on television and being in DC, so I'd like some of my freshman people to understand.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I was going to say ... reading between the lines, it sounded as if you were somewhat critical of some of the people who were freshman who were making big proposals.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Big proposals are fine, and I'm on some of them, but they need to ... it's going to hurt us in 2020. We had a hearing on the science committee, and last week every question was about the New Green Deal, and that's why Trump brought it up in his State of the Union and talked about socialists. That's obviously where they're going, and that's not going to be helpful to us to get elected. I've heard

several of our members mumble and say, some of these freshmen need to be a little less vocal and not ruin 2020, because if we don't win 2020, I think we're in real danger. That's when you need to sublimate some of your grand .. every night is not a Sunday.

[Jane Hall:](#)

You don't want to run on the Green Deal?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

No, I mean it's going to work against us because it will cost a bunch. It could have been done in a different way. I was a little surprised that Markey did it. It activates the Greens, and that's important to get them activated and out, but the cost. The Republicans are right that you should stop having people eat hamburgers because of the whole thing about flatulence and the cows. You all know about that, don't you? I thought it was a joke at first. I thought no, that's horse manure. It's cow manure.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Anyway, I thought it was talking about tractors and farm equipment to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but no, they were honestly talking about trying to find a way for the farm factories to be reduced. I think one of them said, I think it was my friend, AOC, and she said, well you're not going to be able to eat hamburger for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Not a bad menu. That's American as an apple pie and hamburger. You want to eat it? We're not going to stop that. We shouldn't suggest we're going to start telling you to eat gluten free yogurt or something. Eat your burgers.

[Alexis Arnold:](#)

Hi. my name is Alexis Arnold. I'm a junior journalism Major. I guess my question was following Michael Cohen's pretty salacious testimony yesterday and the upcoming Mueller report, what do you expect to happen? What do you expect the ramifications will be? The concrete thing that you would hope to or think will happen.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I think the government Oversight Operations Committee, Oversight Committee, is gonna look into other witnesses, like the count, weezen band or wisen baller or whatever his name is, and they may even call Donald Junior, but there are several names that Michael Cohen mentioned, that they will call those people to get more information, put some flesh on the bones that he put out there. And there'll be people who have documents and people who will not have had convictions. They'll have convictions, but the right kind of convictions. And they'll bring more information and we'll find more and more.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

What Michael Cohen said yesterday was nothing I haven't been saying for over two years. He's a liar, he's a con man, and he's a racist. And Michael Bloomberg told us that at the Democratic National Convention. He's a New Yorker, and he knows a con man when he sees one. Donald Trump is, nobody in New York respects him. We need to get to the bottom of it.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I don't think it's gonna get to impeachment immediately, it might have to get there because the acts are gonna be so opprobrious and the information's

gonna be so chilling. The fact he ... while back he said he went to Penn and he was first in his class, and now we find out that he wrote Penn and threatened them if they released his grades. You think he'd threaten them to release his grades if he was first in his class? They'd be written up on the Washington Monument, on 4th of July, save the date.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Okay, we have a question here.

[Tyler:](#)

Hi, I'm Tyler and I'm a political communication Master's student, and so my question, going in the same line of direction is, by what means is Congress have to access the Mueller report if that, if Attorney General William Barr is a little bit less than forthcoming with the results?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

We can subpoena it. Now they will fight it, it'll be in the courts forever, and I think he's gonna hope that John Roberts, it'll come down to Justice Roberts. And I think Justice Roberts is gonna be the difference and I think he's gonna do the right thing and make it available.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Now he could always rule that it's executive and that the statute says that the Attorney General decides. You cannot indict, according to the Justice Department, the president. And they say, we don't release material on people who haven't been indicted. And so, if he can't indict the president and the only recourse you could have is impeachment, then you should release the information, because otherwise, it's a big coverup.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So, I think Roberts'll do the right thing. I think John Roberts, he's our only hope. That and Ruth Bader Ginsburg's doctor.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Yes, other questions?

[Emily:](#)

Hi, my name's Emily Morris and I study political science at American and I'm in Professor Hall's Politics in the Media class and we talk a lot about the use of social media nowadays in political campaigns and in office and I was just, since you've been around in Congress kind of through this change, I wanted to know how you've adapted to that and how you account for that?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Well, it's a change. I'm gonna be 70 in May, I've been doing this for a long time, and yeah, so I had to adjust. And I don't have children, so I've had to learn on my own, and sometimes I've made a mistake or two. I've done a few tweets that I probably shouldn't have done. I thought they were funny ... but anyways, I've learned.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But now I have somebody in my office who's special for social media. It's a younger guy and we work together and it's an effective tool. Very effective. We just started Instagram, we just started that. I may be slow to the game but we did Instagram.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Bart Sullivan's here with me, who's my press relations communications director, but he's within almost the margin of error of me in age, and so, you know, he's learning too about social media. It's important to do it and we're doing it. It's just astonishing to me that, how AOC has a million or two million followers and the power that has, and Trump has a hundred billion or whatever. I'm really doing good at 55 thousand. Most people-

[Jane Hall:](#)

That's a lot.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

... Most of my folks, my colleagues, have got like 15 to 25 thousand, and I've got 55 thousand.

[Jane Hall:](#)

You actually tweet yourself?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Oh I tweet a lot. I tweet a lot. And I have fun doing it, it's really great. One day I did something, I think Giuliani made some stupid statement, and I was just sitting in my front room, me and my cat, and I decided to tweet out something about, I think he said Barack Obama was less American than he was, and I said, maybe 3/5ths as American as you are. And that got me five thousand new followers within 48 hours. So that's pretty fun to just sit there and just ... five thousand, that's ten percent of my team! So you can get a job in Congress, people are hiring people simply for the social media.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Do you think cable news is part of the problem? I mean I've been on, I used to debate Bill O'Reilly, when I thought that was a valiant thing to do, about the media. But you know, you're on MSNBC, do you think cable news is part of the problem in terms of polarization in this country?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

It is, I think and y'all won't know these names, probably. If we could go back to just Walter, Chet and Huntley and David Brinkley and ABC has somebody, Peter Gerald or somebody.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Peter Jennings.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Peter Jennings, yeah. It was fine, we had three networks, and they all did the news and it was pretty much the news and everybody kinda got the same facts and nobody thought there was fake news. Now we're all siloed, and before, I get a lot of people write, send me awful Twitter messages and Facebook stuff and just, really vile stuff. And before I do my Bruce Willis on 'em. Yippee ki yay, gone! I will look at them and see what they're about. And check out their Facebook, their likes and, an inordinate amount of time but you don't have children, you can do that type of thing. And so many of 'em watch Fox News, and that's all they watch and if you only watch [crosstalk 01:01:14] and if you only watch Fox-

[Jane Hall:](#)

How are you portrayed on Fox News?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

... I don't go on Fox News anymore. I used to but it just took too much time after I was on, all the phone calls that came from my district office and my local office and it was just, four letter words and hate and whatever. It's just not worth it. The caucus encourages us to go on and thinks that they have a more moderate viewership than I suspect they have and that the reaction I get, I just think that it's impossible to communicate with them. So I quit going on.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But we do have silos, and some people watch nothing but Fox and other people watch nothing but MSNBC, which, sometimes I watch, I mostly watch MSNBC, but there are times, it's like, especially in that morning show in that 8 o'clock slot with Mika and the husband. And I just have to switch to CNN to get away from it, get a refresher.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Other questions?

[Meton:](#)

Hi, Maton Adme here, I'm in the School of International Service here at AU, also ZBT. I was wondering, because you were on the Helsinki commission and because you were just recently in Munich, how bad have relations gotten with Europe since Trump took office? And the follow up for that, are you looking for interns?

[Jane Hall:](#)

That's the real key question here, tonight.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Your second question, we're always looking for good interns and if you want to apply, we'd be happy to have you apply and may be an opportunity for you. We look for good people, and American University has a lot of good folks who've come to the Hill and worked, so we know that y'all are well educated, so please. Tell me your name again? Maton, okay.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

And as far as how we're looked at, you know, Trump, people don't understand it. They just think what's going on, they don't get it at all. But I'm concerned about his relationship with Russia. I don't know that he would invoke Article 5 if they went into the Baltic region, Estonia, if they went into the Balkans, which is where the military folks I talked to last week thought was the most likely spot for them to hit, and it was, I guess they were concerned about Kosovo, and they were close to Serbia. They made efforts to get in ... Montenegro. And a lot of that selling their gas, their energy.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But no, our relationship's not good. And those are allies, and that's, you need to stick with your friends. And I had a Polish Parliamentarian come see me yesterday, they want American bases in Poland, we may put them there. I mean, Trump's talk has been worse than his actions.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I mean so far we haven't given up anything to Russia. We haven't been real strong, I mean they took some sailors recently and we haven't really responded real well to it. But he really hadn't done anything to, and Putin hadn't tested

him, necessarily, which I'm surprised about. I don't know what would happen if he tested him and went into Estonia. It's pretty bizarre.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Our generals, they say they have good relationships with their fellow military people throughout Europe, they do exercises together, they do exercises with the Serbians who are also close to the Russians. But do they have good relations? They have good relations with folks in Hungary and that's an awful group but they work with us and we have common exercises together.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Things in operation aren't as bad as they are the tweets and the talk. But then there's a concern because there's something going on with Putin and Trump that's just not normal, and you know, the first thing Jared Kushner did when he came in was to try to get a back channel to Russia, so. I'm concerned.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I wanna ask you, where do you think this all ends? Do you think it's possible that the president will be indicted at some point?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

He could be indicted by New York state authorities. I don't think there's any, and I know there's no prohibition on a state government from indicting the president. There's no Constitutional reason why he can't be indicted federally except the policy of the Justice Department and then there's the issue that's been raised, does that policy extend to when the administration ... misdeeds relate to securing the office. And that's something nobody's ever thought about, had never come up, because I guess nobody ever thought somebody would do such a thing. We're in new territory, new terrain.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So I don't think he'll be indicted, I do think he's got problems with the New York state Attorney General will be after him for the Foundation. And we saw what Michael Cohen said yesterday, we know the Foundation. They've been banned from being on any foundation for five years or something. I mean, they can't be on any not for profit board for five years. What's the biggest not for profit in the world? United States government. And he's running it. And it's a guy that the New York state Attorney General has banned from being on an otherwise not for profit for five years, because of their lack of ethical oversight of those funds.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So I don't think he'll ... he'll have investigations whether he's indicted in New York or not, I don't know. I don't know what the Southern district's gonna do, they're gonna get a lot of stuff but they can't indict him either.

[Jane Hall:](#)

If we get to impeachment, do you think Republicans will, will it be in any way, will it be bipartisan in the way that we romanticize that the Watergate hearings were?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

The Watergate hearings were when the Republicans finally decided, and it was just at the last minute, that their throats were about to be cut. And if they decide that Trump is bad for the Republicans keeping their seats in the Senate, then people will throw him overboard in a minute. His, what is the line about a

mile long and an inch deep? His appreciation, his love is about an inch deep, and a lot of those people would be happy to get rid of him. There're a lot of them.

[Jane Hall:](#)

But they stuck with him because they're afraid of being, why do you think they've stuck with it?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Their base. The Republican base is still with him, the gerrymandering and all of the Republican seats are more Republican base, they're determined in the primary and people are ... look at it two ways, one, they're being responsive to their constituents, or their hardcore constituents. Or they are just being concerned about re-election. And it's a balancing act, sometimes you cast votes to get re-elected, sometimes you cast votes based on what you know and what you think is right. In this case, what it is, I don't know. But their base is still pretty strong.

[Jane Hall:](#)

He still has a lot of approval among a lot of Republicans.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Right, right. So I don't expect him to get arrested, I don't expect him to quit, I don't expect him to start telling the truth and we'll just play it out and it'll be the election in 2000, that's the big thing in 2020, we've gotta win that election.

[Jane Hall:](#)

Yes, question, sorry. Can't see. Yes?

[Speaker 1:](#)

Hi, thanks Representative Cohen for being here. So, you were talking earlier about how a lot of people are good talk but not great voting. And this isn't about voting, but you're really vocal about a lot of issues. I've looked at your Twitter. Prescription drug prices, climate change, gun purchase background checks, US NATO relations, all that good stuff. And I was just wondering if you ever feel like, being committed to so many issues can affect your, or has affected your impact that you can make on any one or multiple of those issues at once?

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Even though I don't chew gum, I could do it at the same time. No, I have a lot of issues I'm concerned about and I try to have an impact. You know, you only get one shot in life. And you need to make that worthwhile. If you get the opportunity to serve, particularly in ... interesting times. Confucius. And times when you can make a difference, you need to make a difference. And you know, I don't know how long I'm gonna be on earth, I don't know how many elections I'm gonna run and gonna win in. But while I'm here, I'm gonna make the most of it and I'm gonna try to make my voice known and try to move the agenda in any many areas as I can. I think everybody should try to do that.

[Jane Hall:](#)

I have one other thing to ask you, which is a question a woman in the class had about-

[Steve Cohen:](#)

I'm not gonna get my hair cut.

[Jane Hall:](#)

... no. About being Southern and Jewish, how does that inform, and representing a black district, how does that inform or does that inform who you are and what you do, would you say? That's kind of a big ol' question, but.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Being Jewish, I always go back to Albert Einstein, and there's a quote I saw on the walls of the Holocaust Museum. Einstein wasn't very religious, but Einstein said, "There are three things about the Jewish people that makes me proud to be one of them. A desire for justice, almost to a fanatical state. A yearning for independence. And an interest in knowledge for its own sake." And those three things, knowledge, which you're getting here at American U and you need as much of it as you can, fighting for justice, and an independent streak are things that I think I got partially from being Jewish.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Jewish folks are generally, we've been persecuted and discriminated against for a long time. The inquisition, the Holocaust, you name it. Lots of things. And so, we relate to people who are discriminated against and wanna give people opportunities and wanna see civil right and civil liberties. So it's a great, great, it's hard to fathom that I'm the chairman of this committee, Civil Rights and Liberties and Constitution. It's like being a rabbi. Not that I ever wanted to be a rabbi, but it's on that kinda level.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

Being Southern, I'm in a unique spot. There's not been, there's never been a person who's had a minority majority district that was elected to the position. There was Lindy Boggs in Louisiana, who had a majority district, Caucasian district that became majority minority while she was there, and there was Wyche Fowler in Georgia who had a similar situation, and there was Gary Peters who had one term, and then he went to the Senate.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

But there's been nobody in the situation I've been in, and it's my constituents, and African American people and you can't say like, all African American people are X, Y, or Z. And I don't get every single vote, but most of the African American people that I come in contact with are very caring and concerned and sympathetic and they know right, because they have had so much injustice put upon them that they know what it's about, they're not gonna see it put on somebody else.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So it's given me the opportunity to have the issues I've got. I'm liberal, and some people didn't think, you know, I got attacked in my first re-elect by some ministers, because I voted for the Hate Crimes Bill. My predecessor, Harold Ford Junior had voted for the Hate Crimes Bill, nobody said a thing about it. I voted for it and it was ... pastors were gonna be arrested for preaching against homosexuality. Insane. That's history, we're beyond that.

[Steve Cohen:](#)

So I'm blessed to have the constituents I've got and I think the reason they've embraced me is because I work hard and I'm a straight shooter and they know it. And it's a good situation and it's good to be at American University. And thank you for the opportunity and I urge you to be a good intern and vote in 2020.

[Steve Cohen:](#) Let me ask you one other question, how many people have ever heard of Julian Bond?

[Jane Hall:](#) He was here.

[Steve Cohen:](#) I know, he taught at American. That's what I was just thinking of. Julian was one of my great friends, and he taught, I guess it was African American political history?

[Jane Hall:](#) He taught about the civil rights movement here.

[Steve Cohen:](#) And was just a great civic rights leader, he passed away about two years ago. He used to like to call himself Race Man and he's got a bench somewhere out in Maryland, and on the bench it says on the back of it, Race Man. And he was a great leader on SNCC and went to Morehouse.

[Steve Cohen:](#) But there're people at American University, the Perry Wallaces and the Julian Bonds that you remember. But all my good political friends have always been African American. And one of them passed away this past week. A man named Russell Sugarman who was the Julian Bond of Memphis and those people are leaving us, so if you have a chance here during Black History Month to recognize them and honor them, please do so. They had to fight their own country to get their rights, they should be honored as veterans and given medals. Thank you.

[Jane Hall:](#) Thank you very much.

[Jane Hall:](#) You've been listening to American Forum Café, a podcast production of the American University School of Communication. The podcast was produced, recorded and edited by Matthew Gone. You can find more episodes at our website, [americanforum.org](http://americanforum.org). Check out our students interviewing other students about our topics on our website and on our Instagram, [americanforumAU](https://www.instagram.com/americanforumAU).

[Jane Hall:](#) I'd like to thank the Kennedy Political Union for co-sponsoring our conversation with Representative Steve Cohen. You can follow the Kennedy Political Union at AUSGKPU on Twitter to learn more about their upcoming speakers.

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