March 23, 2017

Trump cannot be trusted

Recent White House contortions explaining what President Trump meant by "wiretap," combined with statements by the FBI director and the House and Senate Intelligence Committee chairs that there is "no wiretap evidence," reaffirms what Democrats and Republicans have known for months: Richard Nixon notwithstanding, for the first time in modern history - perhaps ever - we have a president whose words mean anything and, therefore, absolutely nothing ("FBI confirms probe of Trump, Russia," Tuesday).

Trump has little credibility. He cannot be trusted to speak truthfully, accurately, and consistently. He seems totally unaccountable for his discourse. This is an extremely dangerous state of affairs. If we cannot take the commander-in-chief’s words literally, and if Trump and his surrogates interpret and reinterpret his words after the fact to mean anything they desire, where does that leave our ability to communicate and govern? At this point, why would or should anyone, whether foreign leaders, members of Congress, or citizens believe or count on him?

The only question remaining is: How long will we ignore, excuse, and permit Trump’s irresponsible and unethical rhetoric to persist?

Richard Cherwitz, communication professor,

University of Texas at Austin, cherwitz@austin.utexas.edu