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# CLARION

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## Political Leaders Shouldn't Demand Loyalty

Editorial By  
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Former FBI Director James Comey testified that President Trump demanded loyalty and called for an end to the investigation into former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's connections to Russia. That's disturbing.

Since when do we pledge loyalty to a person? Adolf Hitler did that with the German Army. We're a democratic country here, not fascist. We pledge allegiance to and respect for the country, not an individual leader. That's ridiculous.

When Trump made his demand for loyalty, Comey said he would give him honesty. That's a good answer. We ought to get more officials to make that pledge. Instead he got fired.

The sad part about the whole situation is that some members of the Senate accept Trump's actions as a fact of life. Demanding loyalty from the director of the FBI is not OK. The head of the FBI reports to the attorney general, not the president. And that person is responsible for overseeing investigations into violations of federal law, which could include investigating the president.

After all, the FBI discovered the connection between President Nixon's campaign and the men who broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters. That led to the Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation.

Trump kept talking about possible tapes of his conversations with Comey, but then tweeted he didn't record those talks. If tapes did exist, then this whole dispute between the two would be over.

Comey said he was worried Trump would lie about their conversations, so he documented the interactions – something he never did with President Obama.

During his testimony, Comey admitted leaking that information to the press. He gave notes he took about his meetings with Trump to a friend, a Columbia Law School professor, to hand over to the media.

Trump is angry that Comey released information about their private interactions and his lawyer plans to file a complaint with the Department of Justice. But a conversation with the president isn't classified. It seems anything the administration doesn't want people to know about gets classified.

There are too many classified documents. We need to be more open. We can't classify everything as state secrets. The people have a right to information unless its release is going to cause harm.

I haven't met a political leader that I would give allegiance to like I would my country. And Trump certainly isn't someone I would pledge loyalty to. I'm glad Comey stood his ground. He may be out of a job, but he did the right thing.