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Subject: POLITICO Playbook, presented by Samsung: THROWDOWN THURSDAY: COMEY's legacy day -- TRUMP leaves hole in schedule during hearing -- THE RNC'S TALKING POINTS and 'suggested tweets' for today's big event -- SPOTTED at Trump Int'l hotel -- B'DAY: Barbara Bush
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Today's PLAYBOOK presented by Samsung

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DRIVING THE DAY

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Good Thursday morning. GET READY FOR THROWDOWN THURSDAY. James Comey's testimony before the Senate Intel Committee starts at 10 a.m. Today all the networks and all the cables will be live -- with a few of them offering up live streams for free online. And if James Comey's much buzzed about statement is any indication of his savvy and willingness to dish, Trump will be more than tweeting today. He'll be seething. **Comey's statement** <http://bit.ly/2rMG1bK>

FOLLOW POLITICO's two reporters in the hearing room (Hart 216) today: Josh Gerstein ([@joshgerstein](https://twitter.com/joshgerstein)) and Kyle Cheney ([@kyledcheney](https://twitter.com/kyledcheney)).

THE PRESIDENT'S THURSDAY -- Trump speaks at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's Road to the Majority Conference at 12:15 p.m., and then will host governors and mayors at the White House for an infrastructure summit at 3:30.

-- NOTES: The president has nothing before his 12:15 speech. Some of the newsiest

bits of the hearing will be at the top. **THE PRESS BRIEFING TODAY** is with Sarah Huckabee Sanders and it will be off camera. Speaker Paul Ryan is holding his weekly press conference at 11:30 a.m. today in the Capitol.

REMEMBER THIS -- Comey isn't constrained by traditional political considerations. Today will shape his legacy. Our reporting tells us that members of Congress don't expect him to accuse the president of a crime, but expect him to be extremely open about what transpired behind closed doors. We are told that he will, at times, go beyond what he wrote in his statement.

THE BIG PICTURE -- NYT, A18 -- "Comey's Political Shrewdness Is on Display in Tussle With Trump," by Peter Baker and Glenn Thrush: "The morning, at least, seemed to go reasonably well for President Trump. He announced a new F.B.I. director, and two intelligence chiefs told Congress the president had never pressured them to interfere in the investigation into Russian election meddling.

"And then James B. Comey ... dropped the hammer. By authorizing the immediate release of the opening statement he plans to give in his much anticipated appearance before a congressional committee on Thursday, he instantly changed the conversation back to his assertion that the president tried to shut down part of the F.B.I. investigation.

"Mr. Trump may be relatively new to Washington, but Mr. Comey is not. A savvy veteran of the capital who has worked in high positions in multiple administrations, he has usually emerged on top in any internal power struggle. And in the month since his dismissal, Mr. Comey has shown why presidents are normally loath to fire F.B.I. directors." <http://nyti.ms/2sGpeXF>

THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE sent an email at 9:56 p.m. last night to people around town with the subject line: "Talking Points and Digital Packet for Senate Intelligence Committee Hearing." The first item under "top takeaway" is "President Trump feels completely and totally vindicated by Former FBI Director James Comey's opening testimony and is eager to move forward." It includes a "suggested tweets" section. **The RNC talking points** <http://politi.co/2sGgWPA> ... **WSJ:** RNC says they've dedicated 60 aides to the pushback effort. <http://on.wsj.com/2s6pNxo>

THE COUNTER ATTACK -- "West Wing aides fearful of directly attacking Comey: The White House has outsourced its counter-messaging effort during Comey's testimony, as aides try to avoid more personal legal risk," by Matt Nussbaum, Josh