

PERSPECTIVES

United States VS. President Clinton



The Senate trial is scheduled to begin today, but most are uncertain of how the trial should proceed

Opinion



Stefanie Knowlton

Bogged down by the rhetoric coming from both Democrats and Republicans, the situation seemed surreal until now. President Clinton is going to trial and he could be removed from office, which would be the first time in history that a president would be forced to leave office.

With this solemn task in hand, the Senate is uncertain of how to proceed. Once the trial begins there are three possible outcomes: one, with a majority vote the Senate could call off the entire trial, two; with a two-thirds vote the Senate could remove the president from office, three; with majority vote the Senate could call for a censure of the President.

The first option is not likely considering that Republicans, assuming they will vote along party lines, occupy 55 seats in the Senate; therefore making a majority vote of 51 to dismiss the case next to impossible. In addition, prominent Democrats such

as Robert Byrd, the Senate's senior Democrat, claim they could go either way.

The second option of removal from office is a little more complicated. A two-thirds vote will be hard to accomplish even if some of the Democrats in the Senate are swayed into voting for it.

Lastly, the much debated censure vote. Although the Senate did censure Andrew Jackson in 1834 for withholding documents, the right to censure a President is not granted under the Constitution. The Constitution gives Congress the right to censure one another but nowhere does it include the right to censure a president.

This fact has led several people to argue the constitutionality of censure against a President. Former President Andrew Jackson was censured in 1834 for withholding documents from the Senate, but the censure was removed from the record some years

later. Some are concerned that if we allow censure, we would set a precedent allotting more power to the Congress than originally intended by the founding fathers.

This claim is a serious one but untrue. Everyone agrees that the Constitution is a sacred document that continues to be the cornerstone of our government. But sometimes we need to change it in order to deal with circumstances not foreseen by those who drafted it. The amendments of the Constitution themselves speak to this need.

As a country we are very young, and as a government we are even younger. This is only the second time in history that we have faced a presidential Senate trial. We need a middle ground when removal from office is not warranted or attainable.

Lying under oath and obstruction of justice are serious crimes that the

President faces. Yet these crimes were committed in relationship to his personal life and not to his political office. Therefore, I believe that they are not impeachable offenses.

I do, however, believe that the President needs to take responsibility for his actions and be reprimanded for his crimes even if they are in regard to his domestic life.

If we had a censure that included a signed admittance of guilt and an apology from the president, that would serve as an appropriate punishment for the crimes committed. If the Senate proceeds in any other way it would be a miscarriage of justice and a tragedy that the American public will have to deal with forever.

Stefanie Knowlton is an editorial editor for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper

Letters to the Editor

Kangaroo court

I recently witnessed the "hearings process" afforded by Lane County's Animal Regulation Authority. My dog was cited as "potentially dangerous-3" for allegedly biting another dog. I requested a hearing. Present were the hearings official (a County employee), the Animal Control Officer, the complainant and myself.

The Officer read her report, then proceeded to act as the counsel to the complainant. Apparently, the officer has the liberty to act as prosecutor, counsel and witness. Had I known the County would be providing complimentary counsel. I would have requested counsel for myself. A dog owner does not

stand a chance in this biased forum. Dog owners have rights too! My dog was found guilty; I had 10 days to comply with various unreasonable restrictions.

It is ridiculous to impose this level of punishment for a first offense. Bernie Perkins, Director of Animal Regulation was contacted and asked if I could contain my dog in her current kennel. The answer was no. We called Greenhill and they offered to evaluate the dog's behavior, if Lane County would accept that. The answer was no. I was forced to choose between breaking the law and destroying my dog.

This "hearings process" is so radically unfair that it deserves the label "kangaroo court." These

hearings need to be a level playing field for ALL, not a public opportunity for Lane County to embarrass itself, cause adverse public sentiment and showcase its employees as legal representatives.

Gail Cross
Junction City

A question of credibility

This letter is in regard to that myopic supplement in the ODE Nov. 17. Every article in that pack of propaganda was blaming the drug wars for everything from pollution to racism.

Blaming the drug wars for all our financial, social and environmental problems is ludicrous. It's interesting that the pro-pot people state

that hemp will save our environment. The medicinal marijuana people say that pot will cure everything from AIDS to cancer. Poop! Pot doesn't cure anything, THC treats symptoms, or in the case of chemo, patients it treats symptoms of symptoms. That is THC, not pot. And by taxing legal marijuana, this is supposed to save our national debt. Beware, the Red Herring.

I have no problem with a cancer survivor growing a plant or two to sustain some dignity. But 34 plants for one person? Come on. You see addicts are excessive, and one can become addicted to pot when it contains 18 percent or higher THC.

Please listen to and question the credibility of the next voice you hear

touting the benefits of hemp or medicinal pot. Listen to the rasp in his/her throat. Do they look creditable?

And for the folks that like to compare the affects of pot vs. alcohol. Answer this: If you or a loved one were going to have a serious operation which would you prefer; A surgeon who had drunk two cocktails the night before the operation, or one who had smoked a couple of joints?

And if this letter pisses you off, check your motives. Is your brain one of those saturated with layers of THC? If so get some treatment or call Narcotics Anonymous: 341-6070. THC is addictive and it's the primary ingredient in marijuana.

Colin Campbell
Eugene