

WHY IMPEACHMENT IS ESSENTIAL

BY BILL C. DAVIS

"We have before us in the White House a thief who steals the country's good name and reputation for his private interest and personal use; a liar who seeks to instill in the American people a state of fear; a televangelist who engages the United States in a never-ending crusade against all the world's evil, a wastrel who squanders a vast sum of the nation's wealth on what turns out to be a recruiting drive to multiply the host of our enemies. In a word a criminal — known to be armed and dangerous."

—LEWIS H. LAPHAM
"The Case for Impeachment"
Harper's Magazine, March 2006

Say it and you're told it won't happen.

There's a conscious rage and an unconscious self-defeating deference to the absoluteness of the power that caused the rage. Whether we know it or not we are defeated by that realization.

Impeachment: Impossible — stop thinking about it! Translated: We don't matter. They know it and we know it. The "leaders" that perhaps, and in not a few minds, most likely, rigged two national elections, quite possibly allowed 9/11, definitely invaded Iraq and lied to do so, depleted the U.S. treasury — or more specifically, redistributed the treasury to internal, private and corporate allies, sanctioned torture and domestic spying — those people can never be impeached or even investigated.

If we felt we owned the house, we'd say get out. But we don't feel we own the house. We are reduced to squatters, who will grumble and pay fees for the plot of land allowed us, but we know now the land isn't ours. We know the government and its treasury isn't ours. So when someone says impeach — *i.e.*, evict — the response, even from the people who said, it — not gonna happen.

But impeachment is essential. It is the remedy for, if one believes in it, the national soul. I think there is such a thing and it has material and physical manifestations. When it's sick it demonstrates symptoms — when it's healthy it yields harvests.

A legal and constitutional purge will return the sense of citizen ownership and spiritual health that was robbed along with election 2000. With that first theft all other thefts followed. No, the clock can't be turned back; dead soldiers can't be brought back to life; flesh and blood limbs won't grow back; the money to war profiteers most likely won't be returned to the treasury. But the national soul, spirit, libido, whatever name we give the invisible American essence — that can be resuscitated and revived. And for that to happen, impeachment is essential.

We're being surrounded by a world that doesn't trust us anymore. They aren't all hostile to us — they've lost faith in the power of the American people. And right to the point — as evidenced by comments such as "he should be impeached but it's not going to happen" — we have lost faith in our own power.

It's not personal. It's not about how much we are embarrassed by or don't like Bush. It has nothing to do with individual animosity and everything to do with collective power. When exit polls don't match the official tally it doesn't automatically mean that the time-honored system of exit polls is suddenly unreliable, or that, as we were told, spouses were afraid to admit in front of each other who they voted for. It means something darker and more challenging. The American people did not take the challenge — we did what the coup expected we would do and we have been doing it ever since. *Until now.*

We are at the "until now" moment. Democratic party leaders are uncomfortable talking about it. They think strategy. Impeachment is not a strategy. It's a citizen action. A national correction. A collective redemption. An honest recall. It may happen city by city, state by state — but the body politic has the right, need, obligation to impeach.

"It'll be over soon," is not good enough. "We're at war," is no excuse. The war, as is now apparent, does not need, does not have, the President's attention or wisdom. His job on that front is done — he sent the troops in. That was his role as defined by the Constitution and commandeered by criminality. The war is no longer his to orchestrate or end — so if he goes the war won't notice, except in one way.

Extremist forces may not change their agenda toward us but the angry disappointed moderate elements may reconsider. Proving to that section of the world population that America is of, by and for the people will encourage them to act as blockades against violent reactionary elements. Impeachment could well be the ultimate bunker buster that will purge the leadership that the world wants to get at, through us. Impeachment could move us from being collateral targets to active citizens.

The well-protected architects of this government's suicidal policies are indifferent to what makes us safe. Anyone who talks so much about keeping us safe reveals something quite opposite. What are they trying to convince us of. And why do we believe them?

At Inauguration 2001 there were mink coats, Stetson hats and lots of parties with lots of beef — and in the streets a feeling of free fall. It was just gonna happen — all of it — what ever lurked behind the front called G.W. Bush was going to happen even after we knew the majority didn't ask for it. The free fall is still going on but instead of waiting for the hard landing, we can take the land and instead of falling on our backs, we can stand. But to do that — impeachment is essential.

Bill C. Davis is a playwright.



DAVID HORSEY

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

BY JOHN NICHOLS

Inside the Beltway, legislators have been slow to support moves to censure or impeach President Bush and members of his administration.

Only 33 members of the U.S. House of Representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of Congressman John Conyers' resolution calling for the creation of a select investigative committee. It would be charged with reviewing the administration's preparations for war before receiving congressional authorization as well as manipulation of pre-war intelligence, encouraging and countenancing torture and retaliation against critics such as former Ambassador Joe Wilson. The committee could make recommendations regarding grounds for possible impeachment.

Only two members of the Senate have agreed to co-sponsor Senator Russ Feingold's proposal to censure the President for illegally ordering warrantless wiretapping of phone conversations of Americans.

Outside the Beltway, legislators are far more comfortable with censure and impeachment—at least in the state of Vermont. Sixty-nine Vermont legislators, 56 members of the state House and 14 members of the Senate, have signed a letter to Congress to initiate investigations to determine if censure or impeachment of members of the administration might be necessary.

The letter, penned by State Representative Richard Marek, suggests that Bush's manipulations of intelligence prior to the launch of the Iraq War, his support of illegal domestic surveillance programs and other actions demand that Congress determine whether the time has come for "setting in motion the constitutional process for possible removal from office." Marek, a Democrat, is from Newfane, Vermont, where voters made international news in March by calling for the impeachment of Bush at their annual town meeting.

Noting that his town and a half-dozen other Vermont communities have called for impeachment, as has the state Democratic Party, Marek told *The Rutland Herald*, "Vermonters from across the state have expressed concerns with the President's actions and have displayed that through resolutions, meetings and petitions. I thought it was important to put our voices down as supporting an investigation and possible censure and impeachment."

The letter, delivered to members of Vermont's congressional delegation including Representative Bernie Sanders (the

only Socialist in Congress), a co-sponsor of the Conyer's resolution, is just one of a number of fresh impeachment-related initiatives in Vermont.

State Representative David Zuckerman, a Burlington legislator who is a member of Vermont's Progressive Party, has introduced a resolution asking for the state legislature to call on the U.S. House to open impeachment hearings. Parliamentary procedures developed by Thomas Jefferson as Vice President in the early years of the United States, and still used by the U.S. House, as a supplement to that chamber's standing rules, have been interpreted as giving state legislatures at least some authority to trigger impeachment proceedings. Zuckerman's resolution responds to calls from Vermonters to take that dramatic step.

Several county Democratic parties in Vermont also have urged the state legislature to take advantage of the opening created by "Jefferson's Manual," which suggests impeachment proceedings can be provoked "by charges transmitted from the legislature of a state."

There's no question that Vermont is in the lead, but legislators in other states are also exploring their options for pressing Congress to act on articles of impeachment. A trio of Democratic state representatives in Illinois, Karen A. Yarbrough and Sara Feigenholtz from the Chicago area and Eddie Washington from Waukegan, has introduced a measure similar to the one Zuckerman has prepared in Vermont. The bill urges the Illinois General Assembly to call on the U.S. House to initiate impeachment proceedings against Bush.

In Pennsylvania, State Senator Jim Ferlo, a Pittsburgh Democrat, has launched a public campaign urging his constituents to sign petitions calling for Congress to launch an impeachment inquiry. Ferlo, a former Pittsburgh City Council President, says it's entirely appropriate for state officials and citizens to add their voices to the impeachment debate.

"Impeachment proceedings are now the most important issue facing our nation," Ferlo says. "The debate and opinions expressed should not be limited to the views of journalists, legal scholars, intelligence officials and just a few politicians. Every American must confront this issue and speak out loudly and clearly. This is one opportunity to do so."

John Nichols is associate editor of *The Capitol Times* in Madison, Wisconsin, from which this article is reprinted.



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