

Inquiring Minds topic – 21 June 2019

Riv Swartz, Moderator

To Impeach or Not to Impeach

To Impeach or not to Impeach that is the question: whether nobler in the hearts of men and women to take a stand now, wait for the public to be educated in the Mueller Report or let the public speak in the 2020 election.

This Is the dilemma embroiling Democrats, led by Speaker Pelosi. Currently, Speaker Pelosi seems to be holding steady while being buffeted by the freshmen members of her party who want immediate action and the more moderate members who fear a backlash from Republicans if they move forward.

Since Mueller recently addressed the nation and indicated that if his report would have exonerated President Trump, it would have said so, more congress people have clamored for the immediate approach of impeachment NOW. However, Speaker Pelosi submits that more information is needed before moving forward.

Questions:

- 1. Do you agree that President Trump should or should not be impeached?**
- 2. Why is speaker Pelosi reticent about moving forward with impeachment at this time?**
- 3. What is the current position of Senate Republicans and of the U.S. public? Why?**
- 4. How would one move forward with impeachment based on the following viewpoints: legal, moral and political?**
- 5. How do the Nixon and Trump situation compare?**
- 6. What position regarding impeachment would best serve the people of the United States of America?**

Impeachment rumblings grow among Democrats

theweek.com/print/441063/100051/article

What happened

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi this week faced growing pressure from Democrats to begin impeachment proceedings against President Trump, with an angered Trump saying he would no longer attempt to work with the opposition party on any legislation. In a tense closed-door leadership meeting, Pelosi rejected calls for impeachment from Democrats increasingly frustrated by the Trump administration's blanket refusal to honor congressional subpoenas. Democratic anger boiled over after the White House blocked former counsel Don McGahn from testifying before Congress about Trump's attempts to end or curtail special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, which Mueller listed among 10 possible acts of obstruction of justice. The White House is also refusing to turn over Trump's tax returns, despite a law requiring the Treasury Department to do so upon a request from Congress. "I think we're at an inflection point," said Rep. Ted Lieu of the House Judiciary Committee. "If we can't get information, I think we have to start proceeding down this path."

Pelosi accused Trump of conducting a "cover-up" by trying to hide information from congressional investigators. But the Speaker counseled fellow Democrats to have patience, saying the House still has many options for getting information the president wants to conceal. She pointed to a strongly worded ruling from a federal judge this week ordering Trump's accounting firm to turn over financial documents to Congress.

Pelosi's "cover-up" statement enraged Trump, who stormed out of a meeting on infrastructure with Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer after only three minutes. In a rambling Rose Garden speech after that meeting, Trump said he was done working with Democrats on infrastructure or any other issue unless they end the investigations into his administration. "You can't do it under these circumstances," Trump said. "So, get these phony investigations over with."

What the editorials said

“It’s understandable that Democrats are concerned that an impeachment fight” could get in the way of their campaign to unseat Trump in 2020, said **Cristian Farias** of *The New York Times* editorial board. But Mueller’s report laid out clear evidence of grave misconduct by Trump: eagerly accepting campaign help from a foreign adversary, and making multiple attempts to thwart the Russia investigation. Democrats have a “constitutional duty” to consider whether Trump has violated his oath of office.

Democratic leaders know impeachment “would be a disastrous waste of time,” said the *New York Post*. But Pelosi and Nadler know that their Trump-hating base will never accept that, so they’re doing their best to appease the “Impeach now!” wing of the party with pointless theatrics. The president has the “right to frank, confidential discussions with his staff,” so Democrats can’t force McGahn to testify. Nevertheless, Democrats are portraying the White House’s inevitable use of executive privilege as a cover-up. “It’s all a show.”

What the columnists said

The Democratic leadership’s “reluctance to even utter ‘impeachment’ is becoming untenable,” said **Dahlia Lithwick** in *Slate*. More than 900 federal prosecutors—including many Republicans—signed a letter stating that Trump would already be facing “multiple felony charges” if Justice Department rules didn’t prevent sitting presidents from being indicted. With Trump’s “lawless” and “corrupt” administration now rejecting any form of congressional oversight and threatening to investigate investigators, the president clearly “believes himself all-powerful.” Democrats will only cede even more power to him by declining to impose consequences. Political calculations should not take precedence “over the rule of law.”

Relax, Democrats, “Pelosi’s strategy is working,” said **Rick Wilson** in *TheDailyBeast.com*. The political momentum for impeachment is building, thanks to the House’s efforts. This week a federal court ruled that the House is entitled to Trump’s financial records held by an accounting firm. Trump’s taxes, which he clearly sees as his political “kryptonite,” could be next. Trump’s foot-stamping on McGahn and Mueller also ensures that, if and when the Democrats do compel them to testify, it will be must-see television. For

now, the smart play remains the same: “Impeachment in All but Name.”

Sorry, but anyone hoping for Watergate 2.0 is “likely to be disappointed,” said **Megan McArdle** in *The Washington Post*. The revelations about Nixon’s crimes started small “and gradually got bigger and bigger.” Trump’s transgressions “were almost immediately overhyped as hard evidence of an active conspiracy with a foreign power.” But in the Mueller report, they’ve mostly been downgraded to obstruction of justice. Will that capture the public’s imagination? “Just ask the Republicans who futilely impeached Bill Clinton.” Don’t be so sure impeachment will backfire this time, said **Aaron Blake**, also in the *Post*. Clinton’s scandal was fairly simple: “He engaged in an affair, lied about it, and covered it up.” Trump’s obstruction, however, pertained to grave matters of national security and election integrity. If his outrageous behavior is detailed in televised hearings, it could shift public opinion. “Nobody should overextrapolate the lessons of 1998-99 onto 2019.”

What next?

House Democrats are still negotiating with the Justice Department to secure testimony from Mueller, said **Jeremy Herb** in *CNN.com*. The special counsel is reportedly willing to testify behind closed doors, but doesn’t want to speak in a televised public hearing, for fear of being forced to take sides in a partisan struggle. But Democrats are insisting that Mueller testify publicly. “This is an investigation that was done on behalf of the American people after our democracy was attacked by a foreign adversary,” said Rep. David Cicilline of the House Judiciary Committee. “They have a right to see the results of the investigation and really hear from the individual who led it.” House Democrats did win a battle to see some of Mueller’s underlying evidence, said **Michael Balsamo** in the *Associated Press*. The Justice Department has agreed to turn over some counterintelligence documents from the special counsel investigation to the House Intelligence Committee. In exchange, Democrats agreed not to pursue an unspecified “enforcement action” against Attorney General William Barr.