



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 165

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019

No. 106

House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DESAULNIER).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 24, 2019.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK DESAULNIER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2019, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. HIMES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle know that I shy away from sharp partisanship in favor of the negotiation and compromise required for law to be made.

I marvel every day at how rarely the pragmatic common sense of the American people is given voice in this Chamber. But, Mr. Speaker, there are moments for calculation, for prudence, for

compromise, for the careful weighing of competing interests, and there are moments for clarity and conviction.

This is such a moment. The time has come, Mr. Speaker, for the House of Representatives to begin an impeachment inquiry into President Trump. From the moment of his inauguration, this President has shown contempt for the truth, has attacked our institutions, and has ignored the Constitution he swore to defend.

He has refused the oversight which is Congress' long-established right and duty. In recent weeks, he has refused to comply with subpoenas, he has ordered administration officials to refuse to testify, and he has asserted executive privilege of unprecedented scope with respect to attempts to alter the Census.

That we have not slouched closer to autocracy is due to the strength of the democratic safeguards and protections that we have built and defended for two-and-a-half centuries. Most Americans sense the danger and have reacted, most recently, by electing a House of Representatives with the power and desire to check this President. The President has persistently refused to acknowledge or acquiesce to that power.

Mr. Speaker, the Framers of the Constitution placed the power of impeachment, not in the courts, but in the Congress so that this body might consider not just the facts and the letter of the law, but the broader interests of the Republic. I have, until now, been conflicted about those interests.

Impeachment, along with the right to declare war, is the most awesome power of the Congress. The politics of impeachment are messy and uncertain and might, in the short run, serve the President's narrow political interests.

But look at where we are today. Republicans in this Chamber cheer, or justify, or stand woefully silent in the face of behavior for which they would

have impeached a Democratic President many times over. Our best and most proven ideas cannot get even a hearing in the United States Senate. Unless we restore respect for the law, respect for truth, and respect for common decency, we cannot hope to solve any of our other pressing problems.

The American people should understand that opening an impeachment inquiry is not removal of the President. Given the behavior of the United States Senate, that outcome is probably out of the question. An impeachment inquiry will be a fair consideration of the facts that the American people must understand with both sides fairly and openly represented.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I will be asked if my motive today is to pressure the Speaker of the House whose leadership of this Congress has been superb. It is not. She leads us today in the epic mission of defending our democracy. That mission requires a vigorous debate and competing ideas, but it also requires care, discipline, and a measure of deference.

I represent the people of southwestern Connecticut, the Constitution State. From my house, I can walk to the hill where General Israel Putnam made a daring escape from the British cavalry in 1779, so that Americans would never have to answer to a tyrant for their opinions, politics, or religious beliefs.

Just up the road is the town of Ridgefield where General David Wooster and 20 young patriots died in April of 1777 so that Americans would be spared ever living under a capricious and arbitrary power.

Mr. Speaker, there are moments for careful calculation, for weighing political expediency and conflicting interests, and there are moments for clarity and conviction. This is that moment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H5041