

INTRODUCTION OF THE HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES PROTECTION ACT

HON. ED CASE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 19, 2019

Mr. CASE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague, Representative GABBARD, in introducing our bill to protect one of the most unique and fragile environments on Earth, our Hawai'i, from devastating invasive species.

Invasive species pose an especially grave threat to Hawai'i's unique ecosystems, natural resources and agricultural communities, in part due to Hawai'i's unique geography. Hawai'i is the most isolated island chain and one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world. We are 2,282 miles from the Continental United States, 2,952 miles from Japan and 4,772 miles from Washington, D.C., with no other islands in close proximity. We have within our constrained borders ten of the thirteen world climate zones, with ecosystems ranging from desert to tropical, where plants and animals that found their way to Hawai'i evolved like nowhere else. A 2014 survey identified fully 9,975 endemic species in Hawai'i. These species include the Hawaiian scarlet honeycreeper, the 'i'iwi; the flowering evergreen; and the state bird of Hawai'i, the nēnē.

However, tragically, in large part due to invasive species, Hawai'i has become the endangered species and extinction capital of the world. Hawai'i currently has 503 species listed as endangered, more than any other state and almost half of the total endangered species nationwide. Many of these species are critically endangered and face an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. Although we will never know the true number of species that have gone extinct in Hawai'i, best estimates are that in the last 200 years alone, 28 bird, 72 snail, 74 insect and 97 plant species have gone extinct.

As one particularly poignant example, earlier this year the Atlantic published an article, *The Last of Its Kind*, which chronicled the death of George the snail. He was the last *achatinella apexfulva*, a species of tree snail that is endemic to the island of O'ahu. This article calls attention to the alarming fact that snails in Hawai'i are disappearing at an alarming rate, perhaps faster any animal on Earth right now, victims of various factors in part linked to invasive species.

The threat to our state tree, the 'ōhi'a lehua, is also illustrative of our growing crisis. Used for poi boards and outrigger canoes, the 'ōhi'a lehua is important to Hawaiian culture and the islands' watersheds. As the first tree to grow in new Hawai'i lava flows, 'ōhi'a grows throughout the watershed creating new soil, stabilizing steep mountain ridges and comprises approximately 80 percent of Hawai'i's native forests. However, rapid 'ōhi'a death, or ROD, caused by an invasive fungal pathogen, kills 'ōhi'a trees quickly, and threatens the stability of Hawai'i's native forests. Since its discovery on the Big Island in 2014, ROD has spread to Kaua'i, Maui and O'ahu, and has killed hundreds of thousands of trees.

Hawai'i's unique circumstances also have given rise to one of our nation's most diverse and productive agricultural communities. With a year-round growing cycle, our crops have

ranged throughout our history from the highest quality sugar and pineapple and cattle to tropical specialty crops like fruit and cut flowers in the highest demand worldwide.

Yet it is exactly because these crops like our natural resources have adapted to Hawai'i's uniqueness that they are the most susceptible to devastation from external species against which they have no natural defenses. Invasive species have drastically impacted agriculture in Hawai'i, threatening some of the island's most valuable crops in the state's third-largest industry.

The coffee berry borer, which was discovered in Kona in 2010, now infects all of the coffee growing islands in Hawai'i, except Kaua'i. The coffee berry borer can cause yield losses of between 30 and 35 percent and affects the quality of the coffee beans, directly impacting the income of growers. Our failure to prevent coffee leaf rust from entering Hawai'i could leave one of Hawai'i's most iconic industries devastated.

Hawai'i's third most valuable crop, the macadamia nut, is under threat from the macadamia felted coccid. Macadamia felted coccid has been found in all of Hawai'i Island's macadamia growing regions. The felted coccid reduces macadamia tree output by draining nutrients from the tree. Invasive species coupled with increased rain led to a 22 percent decline in the macadamia nut harvest this year compared to last year.

Yet despite these incontrovertible and growing impacts of external species on Hawai'i's natural resources and economy, existing federal law leaves Hawai'i largely defenseless against increasingly destructive invasives. Imports by air and sea, the only means of inbound transportation to our island state, lack any effective regulation to screen out invasives. This is despite a fairly robust screening of exports from Hawai'i to the Continental United States to screen out invasives from Hawai'i viewed as harmful to mainland agriculture (invasives that, ironically, were invasives into Hawai'i to start with).

I sought to crack down on this lax regime to prevent and curb invasives with my introduction in 2005 of H.R. 3468, modeled after New Zealand and other isolated jurisdictions with then like now the most stringent invasive species prevention regimes in the world. Since the introduction of that bill, the threats from invasives have only grown. Since 2005, 195 invasive species have been introduced to Hawai'i. That is in addition to the roughly 5,000 invasive species that have been introduced to Hawai'i throughout its history.

Our bill, the Hawai'i Invasive Species Protection Act, will require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS), in cooperation with other federal departments and the State of Hawai'i, to conduct visual, x-ray and canine inspections, as appropriate, on person, baggage, cargo and any other article destined for direct movement to the State of Hawai'i. The inspections will search for high-risk invasive species and agricultural materials. The inspections will be conducted at airports, ports and postal sorting facilities prior to direct travel to the State of Hawai'i.

Our bill further requires APHIS to work with the State of Hawai'i to develop and publish a list of the high-risk invasive species and agricultural materials for the State of Hawai'i. It pays for these inspections by increasing Agri-

culture Quarantine Inspection fees to cover the full cost of inspection.

If we truly care about the threat that continued and escalating invasive species pose to one of the most invaluable and unique ecosystems on earth, in addition to our unique economy and way of life, then the stark reality is that this bill is what it will take. Again, it is not revolutionary when compared to other countries that have not only recognized this threat but actually done something about it. And it is certainly not revolutionary when compared to longstanding domestic restrictions on exports from Hawai'i, leading to the basic point that if these invasive species prevention requirements are good enough for the rest of the country and much of the world then they're good enough for Hawai'i.

Madam Speaker, I am grateful to this House for your understanding and careful consideration of Hawai'i's challenge and opportunity, and ask for our bill's expeditious passage. Thank you (Mahalo).

IMPEACHING DONALD JOHN TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, FOR HIGH CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

SPEECH OF

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I am the only member of Congress who has voted to open impeachment inquiries against Presidents William J. Clinton and Donald J. Trump, a Democrat and a Republican.

Since then, I have voted to hold attorneys general of both parties in contempt for obstructing legitimate congressional inquiries.

One of the most important roles for Congress to perform is acting as a coequal branch of government, holding the executive branch accountable to the rule of law and the Constitution.

No one comes to Congress to impeach a president. I have always said it should be a last resort. I know impeachment is inherently divisive and brutal. The first casualty is usually the facts. I took an oath of office, not to any political party or person, but to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. Congress is the only institution in our democracy that can hold a president accountable.

The House opened an inquiry after learning of a whistleblower complaint alleging that the president actively coerced Ukraine to meddle in our elections.

This complaint came from a nonpartisan intelligence officer working in the White House. By law, the report had to be turned over to Congress to be investigated.

As a formal special prosecutor, I know that it is important to follow the facts and evidence. For the past few months, the House investigated these serious allegations outlined in the whistleblower's report. Here are those facts:

During a phone call on July 25th, President Trump asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to "do us a favor though," immediately after discussing frozen military aid. He urged President Zelensky to work with his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani and Attorney

General William P. Barr in opening investigations connected to a political opponent, Vice President Joseph Biden, Jr., and a debunked conspiracy theory alleging that Ukraine—not Russia—was responsible for meddling in the 2016 election.

Just weeks before the call, President Trump withheld nearly \$400 million in critical security assistance to Ukraine, which had been overwhelmingly approved by Congress. No reason was given for the hold beyond that it was directed by the president. The hold on security assistance was lifted only after the whistleblower complaint was filed and Congress opened its inquiry.

The investigation also revealed that besides withholding military aid, the president and his allies withheld White House meetings, phone calls and trade preferences from Ukraine.

We heard from nonpartisan State Department and intelligence officials who worked for the president, and they confirmed the allegations outlined in the whistleblower reporter.

I have reviewed the evidence and followed the hearings. It is clear the president's actions were a flagrant abuse of constitutional power; it was unlawful, and it jeopardized our national security.

The president had every opportunity to present contrary evidence but did not. Instead, he chose to obstruct the inquiry, preventing top officials from testifying and withholding relevant information.

Some have argued to let the voters in the next election decide. But how can we trust an election that the president is trying to corrupt?

I grew up in this country believing no one is above the law, including the president. If any president—Democrat or Republican—had committed these offenses, I would reach the same conclusion. And I ask others how they would feel if President Obama, instead of President Trump, engaged in this conduct.

Not all bad conduct is impeachable. Being rude or mean is not impeachable. Jaywalking, petty theft or infidelity does not put our national security at risk. But asking another country to meddle in our election and withholding vital security assistance to an ally is what our founders feared and why they placed impeachment in our Constitution.

The president once said that he could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody without losing any support. Clearly, he was exaggerating, but have we become so partisan, polarized, and tribal that as long as it is someone on our "team," they can defy the law?

The president is wrong to believe this is all about him. More importantly, it is about defending the rule of law and our Constitution and what signal we send future presidents of what is acceptable behavior. In short, do we want a democracy where no one is above the law, or do we want a monarchy?

The decision of whether the president should be removed from office now rests with the Senate. In the meantime, I will continue to work across party lines, tackling issues of importance like lowering health care and prescription drug costs, ending trade wars, and combating the student loan debt crisis.

IMPEACHING DONALD JOHN
TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES, FOR HIGH
CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

SPEECH OF

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Mr. CONAWAY. Madam Speaker, other than authorizing an act of war, impeachment is the gravest item that we as a Congress can consider. The decision to move forward with impeachment of a United States President is so consequential that it has only been done three times in our entire nation's history prior to this year, all based on legitimate evidence of criminal behavior. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues have diminished what should be a solemn and grave proceeding into an absolute political circus, simply because they don't like the man occupying the White House.

Many Democrats have been intent on impeaching this President since the day he took office. Their actions are clearly motivated by pure hatred for President Trump. This impeachment vote today is simply the next step in their long-held plan to remove him from office.

The partisan impeachment investigation run by the House Intelligence Committee was unnecessarily held behind closed doors, in a room designed to share classified information. Nothing classified was shared during these meetings, but the result of this decision was that most Members of Congress and all Americans were blocked from hearing the facts for themselves.

It's also critical to remember that the House Intelligence Committee had no business conducting the impeachment inquiry to begin with—the House Judiciary Committee is the Committee tasked with all responsibilities surrounding impeachment in the House of Representatives. The Intelligence Committee had no business running this investigation at all, let alone running it in secret. As with past impeachment investigations, the investigation should have been led by a special prosecutor or independent counsel who then would turn over their findings to the Judiciary Committee—none of this happened here.

Chairman SCHIFF repeatedly withheld crucial information from Republicans, including the ability for anyone but himself and his staff to speak with the whistleblower at the center of this investigation. He was even called out by liberal media outlets for spreading misinformation and falsehoods throughout the impeachment process.

The public hearings were held with complete disregard for the House Rules and decades of precedent. Republicans were not allowed to call witnesses or make basic parliamentary motions. In fact, the only witnesses allowed to testify publicly were those who fit neatly within the Democrats' predetermined narrative.

Most importantly, we have not been presented with any real evidence that proves the President is guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors," as required by the Constitution to remove a duly-elected president. If there were criminal activity, as many Democrats have claimed, then why are there no crimes listed in the articles of impeachment?

As a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I have had a ringside seat for not only the impeachment proceedings, but for the years of investigations into President Trump that preceded this one. When I led the Intelligence Committee's Russia Investigation, the Democrat minority led by Rep. SCHIFF was given every opportunity to participate, and they did so. They were not treated as a minority party, where their objections and right to call witnesses were denied as the Democrats did to Republicans in this impeachment investigation. I treated them with fairness and dignity and did not cast aspersions on them by calling their loyalty to our country or motivations into question. The investigation into Russia meddling was thorough and took more than fifteen months, during which we interviewed over 70 witnesses and poured over more than 300,000 documents. This impeachment investigation, by contrast, was rushed through in less than two months, with just a handful of witnesses.

The charade of a fair proceeding was further emphasized with the Democrats' refusal to let the defendant offer evidence and produce witnesses. The defendant—President Trump—has a right to defend himself, a right which was only ceremoniously and speciously offered once the investigation and report were completed.

It is clear—the verdict in the House was predetermined.

This has been a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars and of Congress' time. However, my greatest fear is that it's not over. When Democrats found no evidence of collusion during the Russia Investigation, they pivoted to the Mueller investigation. When Special Counsel Mueller's report did not include anything Democrat's found useful, they refocused their efforts once again to hone in on a supposed scandal with Ukraine. When this inevitably fails too, what will be the next casualty in their desperate attempt to destroy a president they dislike?

We have forever weakened this body by turning impeachment into a political weapon and set a terrible precedent for all future Congresses. This impeachment scheme is nothing more than an attempt to overturn the 2016 election and to conduct taxpayer-funded opposition research and damage the President's electability heading into 2020.

The American people see right through this charade, and are fed up. It's time to stop this madness and get back to the important work the American people sent us here to do.

IMPEACHING DONALD JOHN
TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES, FOR HIGH
CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS

SPEECH OF

HON. TONY CÁRDENAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Madam Speaker, the United States House of Representatives will vote to impeach the President.

This is one of the biggest decisions I have had to make in my seven years in Congress. Since I came to Congress, my goal has always been to help the lives of the people of the San Fernando Valley.