

Senator Hassan's Speech on Senate Floor Announcing Support for Both Articles of Impeachment

February 5, 2020

Mr. President, considering whether to convict a President of the United States on articles of impeachment is a solemn and consequential duty and I do not take it lightly.

Even before we had a country, our founders put forward the notion of “country first,” pledging in the Declaration of Independence their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor – a pledge they made to an idea, imagining and hoping for a country where no one was above the law, where no one had absolute power.

My dad, a World War II veteran, and my mom raised me to understand that this is what made our country the unique and indispensable democracy that it is.

My obligation throughout this process has been to listen carefully to the case that the House Managers put forward and the defenses asserted by the President's lawyers – and then to carefully consider the Constitutional basis for impeachment, the intent of our founders, and the facts.

That's what I have done over the past days. The Senate heard extensive presentations from both sides and answers to the almost two hundred questions that Senators posed to the House Managers and the President's advocates.

The facts clearly show that President Trump abused the public's sacred trust by using taxpayer dollars to extort a foreign government into providing misinformation about a feared political opponent.

Let me repeat that: the President of the United States used taxpayer money that had been authorized, obligated, and cleared for delivery as critical military aid to Ukraine to try to force that country to interfere in our elections. He violated the law and the public trust. And he put our national security, and the lives of Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines of Russian aggression, at risk.

Although the country was alerted to the possibility that the President had crossed a critical line because of revelations about his now infamous July 25th phone call, it is not the phone call alone that led to the President's impeachment. Instead, that phone call was a pivotal point in a scheme that had started earlier, spearheaded by President Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

Mr. Giuliani has acknowledged that he was doing the President's personal and political bidding when he engaged with the Ukrainian government and as the newly elected anti-corruption Ukrainian government came into power, in need of recognition and support from the United States, President Trump forced officials from Ukraine and the United States to negotiate through Mr. Giuliani, conflating his personal and political interests with the national security and diplomatic interests of our country.

And then, as President Zelensky resisted the request that he concoct and announce a fake investigation into the Bidens, the President and Mr. Giuliani increased the pressure. Suddenly and without explanation or a legally required notification to Congress, the President ordered that previously approved and critically needed military aid to Ukraine be held up.

Mr. Trump, at first through Mr. Giuliani, and then directly, solicited interference with an American election from a foreign government. And he ordered others in his Administration to work with Mr. Giuliani to ensure this scheme's success.

Mr. President, while there is still more evidence that the Senate should have subpoenaed — both witnesses and documents — that would have given us a more complete understanding of what happened, we know as much as we do because of the courage and strength of American patriots who put country before self.

Patriots like the Intelligence Community Whistleblower, who was followed by Army Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, and former U.S. Ambassadors to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch and William Taylor. As well as current members of the Administration.

These Americans who came forward were doing exactly what we always ask of citizens: if you see something wrong, you need to speak up. "See something, say something." It is a fundamental part of citizenship to alert each other to danger. To act for the greater good. To care about each other and our country without regard to political party.

When Americans step forward, sometimes at real risk to themselves, they rightly expect that their government will take the information they provide and act to make them safer. To protect their fundamental rights. That's the understanding between the American people and their representative government.

And while the brave women and men who appeared before the House did their jobs, the Senate under this majority, has unfortunately not.

Rather than gathering full, relevant testimony under oath and with the benefit of cross examination, the Senate majority has apparently decided, that despite what it has heard, it is not interested in learning more. Not interested in learning more about how a President, his personal agent, and members of his Administration corrupted our foreign policy and put our nation's security at risk.

Not interested in learning more about how they planned to use the power of his office to tilt the scales of the next election to ensure that he stays in power. Not interested in learning more about how they worked to cover it up.

Increasingly over the last few days, the President's defense team and more and more of my colleagues here in the Senate have acknowledged the facts of the President's scheme. Their argument has shifted from "he didn't do it" to "he had a right to," to "he won't do it again," or even "it doesn't really matter."

I disagree. So strongly.

The idea that in our country, established by the very rejection of a monarchy, the President has absolute power is absurd. As is the idea that this President, whose conduct is ultimately the cause of this entire process, will suddenly stop. President Trump continues to invite foreign powers to interfere with our elections, maintaining to this day that it was quote “a perfect call.”

M. President, our founders knew that all people, all leaders, are fallible human beings. And they knew that our system of checks and balances could survive some level of human frailty even in as important an office as the Presidency.

The one thing that they feared it could not survive was a President who would put self-interest before the interests of the American people, or who didn't understand the difference between the two. As citizen-in-chief, and one wielding enormous power, Presidents must put country first.

Our founders knew that we needed a mechanism to hold Presidents accountable for behavior that violated that basic understanding and that would threaten our democracy.

And they provided a mechanism for removal outside of the election process because of the immense damage a President could do in the time between elections. Damage, in the case of this President's continuing behavior, to our national security and election integrity.

Our founders believed that they were establishing a country that would be unique in the history of humankind, a country that would be indispensable, built on the rule of law, not the whims of a ruler. Generation after generation of Americans have fought for that vision because of what it has meant to our individual and collective success. And to the progress of humankind worldwide.

That's the America that I have sworn an oath to protect.

I will vote in favor of both articles of impeachment because the President's conduct requires it, Congress's responsibility as a coequal branch of government requires it, and the very foundation and security of our American idea requires it.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.