

Cheney Impeachment Gains Traction in House Judiciary Committee

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Nine out of 23 Democratic members of the House Judiciary Committee favor starting impeachment hearings against Vice-President Dick Cheney. Six of the nine are co-sponsors of H.R. 799, which contains three articles of impeachment.

Articles I and II of H.R. 799 accuse Cheney of purposely manipulating intelligence to deceive Congress and the American people about a fabricated threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and about an alleged relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda, respectively. Article III charges Cheney with openly threatening aggression against Iran absent any real threat to the United States. All three articles say Cheney's actions have damaged our national security interests.

Three of the nine Judiciary Committee Democrats who advocate launching impeachment hearings against Cheney, Reps. Robert Wexler (D., Fla.), Luis Gutierrez (D., Ill.) and Tammy Baldwin (D., Wis.), co-authored an op-ed that appeared on December 27 in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

They wrote, "The issues at hand are too serious to ignore, including credible allegations of abuse of power that, if proven, may well constitute high crimes and misdemeanors under the Constitution. The allegations against Cheney relate to his deceptive actions leading up to the Iraq war, the revelation of the identity of a covert agent for political retaliation, and the illegal wiretapping of American citizens."

There is also credible evidence that policies set in Cheney's office authorized the torture of prisoners in U.S. custody, in violation of three treaties the United States has ratified, as well as the U.S. Torture Statute and War Crimes Act. The policies on the treatment of prisoners emanating from Cheney's office triggered the abuse and torture, according to Lawrence Wilkerson, former Secretary of State Colin Powell's chief of staff.

"It was clear to me that there was a visible audit trail from the Vice President's office through the Secretary of Defense down to the commanders in the field," Wilkerson, a former colonel, said on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

In November, the House of Representatives sent the impeachment resolution to the House Judiciary Committee for further proceedings. However many Democrats oppose impeachment, citing the year and a half of testimony about Bill Clinton's personal relations. They think impeachment will detract from Congress's other pressing business.

Yet, the three congresspersons noted, the Clinton impeachment "must not be the model for

impeachment inquiries. A Democratic Congress can show that it takes its constitutional authority seriously and hold a sober investigation, which will stand in stark contrast to the kangaroo court convened by Republicans for Clinton .”

And, they argue, the hearings would “involve the possible impeachment of the vice president – not of our commander in chief – and the resulting impact on the nation’s business and attention would be significantly less than the Clinton presidential impeachment hearings.”

Seventy percent of American voters think Cheney has abused his powers and 43 percent say he should be removed from office, according to a Nov. 13 poll by the American Research Group. Organizations, including the National Lawyers Guild, have called for the impeachment of Dick Cheney.

Impeachment hearings against Cheney would not only fulfill the Constitution’s command that high officials who commit high crimes and misdemeanors be brought to justice. It would also deter the vice president from committing additional crimes that threaten the national security of the United States .

Any impeachment proceeding would have to start in the House Judiciary Committee. The nine Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee who favor impeachment hearings are: Robert Wexler, Fla.; Luis Gutierrez, Ill. ; Anthony Weiner, N.Y.; Tammy Baldwin, Wisc.; Sheila Jackson Lee, Texas; Steve Cohen, Tenn.; Keith Ellison, Minn. ; Maxine Waters, Calif. ; and Hank Johnson, Ga.

Here is a list of the entire House Judiciary Committee:
<http://judiciary.house.gov/CommitteeMembership.aspx>.

For information about the campaign to impeach Dick Cheney, see <http://impeachcheney.org>.

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