



Talking Impeachment: Protecting our Democratic Values

Ellen Buchman

December 19, 2019

After weeks of testimony and debate in both the House Intelligence and Judiciary Committees, last night the House of Representatives took [two historic votes](#) on articles of impeachment, making President Trump the third president in U.S. history to be impeached. The full House bitterly debated the [two articles](#), which address abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, and were approved largely along party lines.

Next, as required by the Constitution, the U.S. Senate will soon begin its trial to determine whether to convict the president of the high crimes and misdemeanors outlined in the articles of impeachment passed by the House. Whether or not the Senate decides to convict the President, this moment in history calls for social justice advocates to weigh in on the importance of interrogating the values of this president and his administration.

The following four tips should be kept in mind when communicating about these monumental votes:

- 1. Keep the messaging goal in mind: center the importance of our Constitution and democracy, and highlight the threats this administration poses to both.**

Provide examples of the principles at stake, such as the importance of the balance of power and the suggestion laid out by the Constitution that everyone¹ in our country is represented by the House of Representatives, which has a duty to ensure that no presidential action should impede fairness and accountability by a government that is formed by and for the people.

- 2. Stick to the news: the president has now been impeached.**

The actions taken by this president over the last three years have amounted to one affront to our values after another. But now the focus is on the narrowly made case for impeachment, which has just been affirmed by the House of Representatives. The votes have been cast, and it's time to share why these actions are important to support, and why President Trump should be held to account.

- 3. Don't get sidetracked by distractions.**

This administration – and the debate in Congress – has thrown us many, many egregious and angering distractions that are tempting to address. Stay the course and use this moment to underscore that we must never concede the democratic principles laid out in the Constitution, as hard won and as imperfect as they may be. This is particularly true

¹ Everyone, with the exception of the people who reside in the District of Columbia, who still do not have representation in Congress.



when it comes to a demagogue who is trying any means necessary to use the power of his office to advance his own political gain.

4. Pivot to the power of action – use VPSA to make your points and quickly call for action.

There is now a new level of urgency for action as the House of Representatives has validated that President Trump should be held to account. Here is a sample VPSA to use to further the conversation and move quickly to call on audiences to take action:

V – Value: Our country’s democratic principles underscoring the importance of government fairness and accountability for and by the people are among those that the march for justice has shown must be secure and accessible to everyone. This is enshrined in our Constitution and our government is organized so that it has the mechanisms needed to adhere to these principles.

P – Problem: President Trump has demonstrated over and over again that he is unfit to uphold these principles. The leader of the free world – our president – has just been impeached as a result of this inability and lack of fitness.

S – Solution: According our Constitution, the U.S. Senate now must hold the president to account for his actions and determine whether to convict him, which could result in his removal from office. It is essential that our elected officials take their oath to serve as impartial witnesses seriously and consider every option for ensuring that President Trump be held accountable for his actions and that our country’s democratic principles – and security – are protected.

A – Action: We must push senators to heed the call of the Constitution and take their responsibility seriously, not politically. They must focus on the promise of our democratic principles and serve their duty by taking the necessary steps following the House’s historic votes and hold this president to account.

The Opportunity Agenda is a social justice communication lab. We collaborate with leaders to move hearts and minds, driving lasting policy and culture change. We bring the inspirational voices of opportunity and possibility to social justice issues through communication expertise and creative engagement.

To learn more, please visit our website at www.opportunityagenda.org.