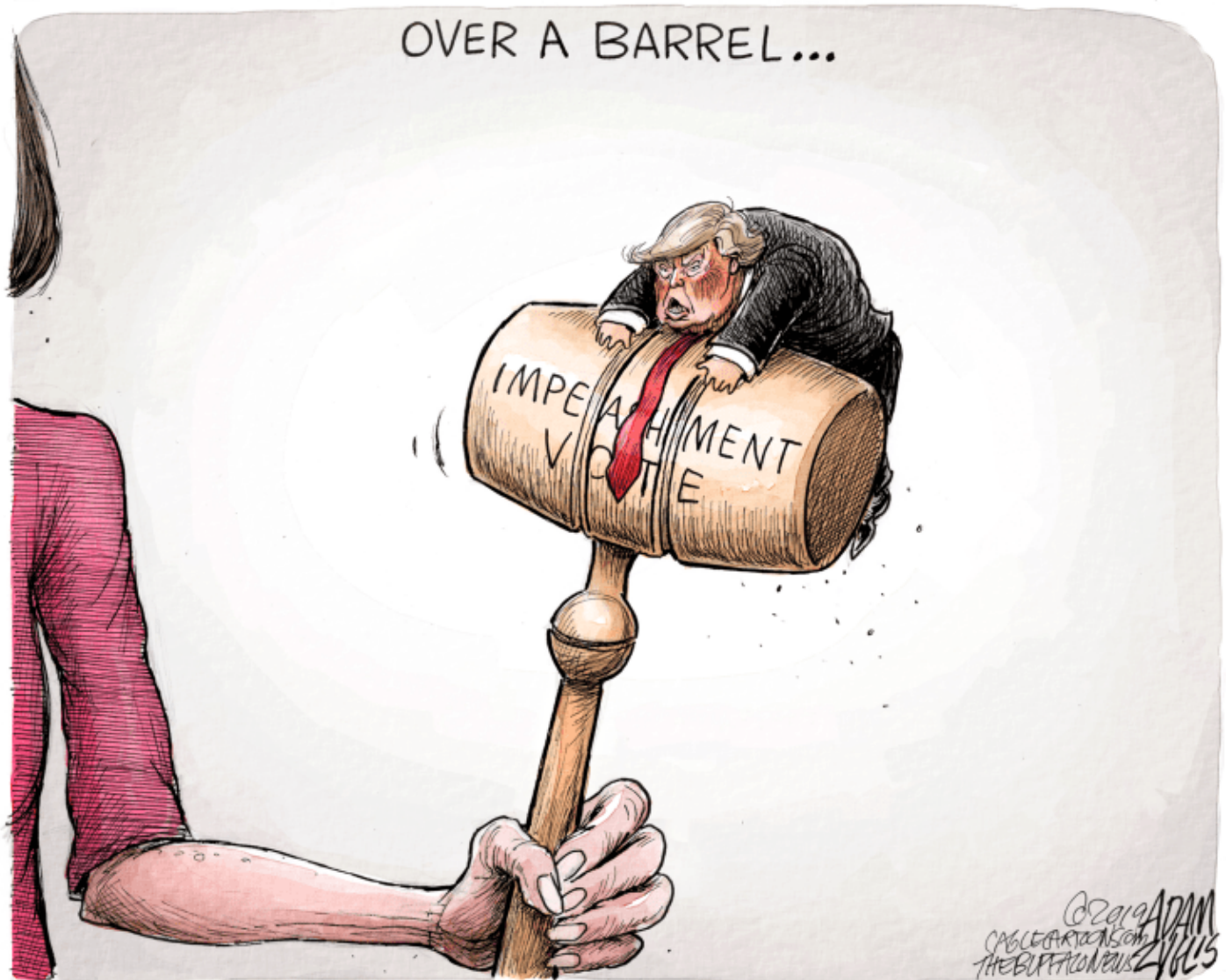


FOR GOOD OR BAD, PELOSI OWNS TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT

Carl Golden, December 17, 2019



From the very beginning, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was a reluctant impeachment warrior. Her political instincts, honed over 31 years in the House and two stints as its presiding officer, warned her that without the country behind her, any effort to overturn the 2016 election and remove President Trump from office would backfire on Democrats, creating a public relations nightmare and potentially costing the party its majority.

She kept the aggressive newcomers – those who provided the majority in the 2018 wave – at bay, counseling patience while keeping close watch on the rising pro-impeachment sentiment.

She understood her pre-condition – convincing the country to support a move against the president – hadn't been met. Her leadership team and senior House members stood by her and dealt with the party's restiveness by insisting the time wasn't yet right.

Pelosi moved incrementally – approving committee investigations and compiling evidence to determine if a formal impeachment process should begin – to lay the groundwork for the historic step of lodging formal charges against the president.

In the face of mounting pressure to act forcefully, she instructed the House Intelligence Committee to open hearings to gather proof of presidential misconduct sufficient to meet the Constitutional requirements for impeachment.

Despite suggestions Pelosi caved in to the loudest voices in the room, her decision was rooted firmly in the political environment. She was satisfied that the country – though divided – supported formal proceedings and could be convinced Congress had no alternative but to begin an impeachment process.

Whatever misgivings she may have had, Pelosi now owns impeachment. She will go down in history as the Speaker who ordered the House to override the will of the voters and remove the duly elected president, even while acknowledging that the charges against him – abuse of power and obstruction of Congress – would not be sustained in the Senate.

Trump will continue in office and seek another term in 2020 as only the third chief executive to be impeached, and the first in history to seek re-election under such circumstances.

It comes as support for Trump's removal has begun to wane in the country, a worrisome omen that the committee hearings and an unprecedented level of media attention has failed to convince many Americans that Trump's transgressions – while distasteful and arrogant – warrant driving him from office.

Trump and his supporters struggled to undermine the validity of the investigations, accusing Congressional Democrats of abusing their Constitutional power solely because they are still smarting from his 2016 victory.

The evidence produced, the administration argues, is wafer thin and based on second and third hand knowledge, biased conclusions and innuendo, and accusations brought by disgruntled individuals with a decidedly partisan tilt.

California Congressman Adam Schiff, chairman of the Intelligence Committee, spent nearly a year insisting that Trump was guilty of impeachable – if not criminal – offenses. But critics claimed he never offered substantiation for his accusations.

Schiff was caught in several instances of shading the truth and contradicting himself, while New York Congressman Jerry Nadler, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, came across as a rather cartoonish figure, a caricature of the big city machine pol. He was clearly out of his depth, conducted often chaotic hearings and failed to control the process.

Pelosi was sufficiently confident in her vote tally that she gave wavering Democrats who represent Trump friendly districts the freedom to go negative to protect themselves in re-election bids. During the entire process, she demonstrated a deft political touch combined with a steely determination to retain control of a renegade band of villagers carrying pitchforks and torches and marching toward the White House.

The outcome – quick acquittal of Trump in the Senate – was clear from the start, but Pelosi was willing to accept that in return for what she firmly believes is the sworn duty and obligation of the House.

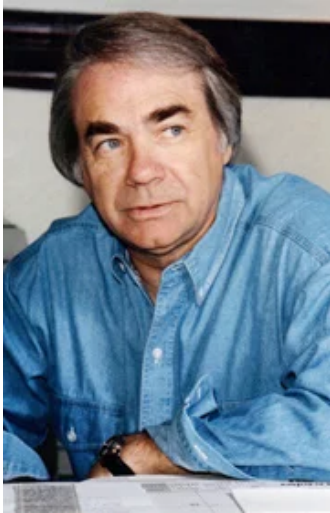
She seems to believe in Winston Churchill's observation of his legacy: "History will be very kind to me, for I intend to write it."

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