

Richard Levick – How to Stop the Madness



“From Andrew Jackson to Richard Nixon, we have seen presidents abuse their power, but we had never witnessed an American president incite a violent mob on the citadel of our democracy in a desperate attempt to cling to power.”

– Representative David Cicilline of Rhode Island

IN MEMORIAM: This week’s essay is dedicated to Capitol Police Officers Brian Sicknick, who was killed in Wednesday’s siege of the United States Capitol, and Howard “Howie” Liebengood, who took his own life over the weekend.

The single article of impeachment, co-authored by Reps. David Cicilline (RI), Ted Lieu (CA) and Jamie Raskin (MD), states that President Donald Trump engaged in high crimes and misdemeanors by “willfully inciting violence against the Government of the United States.” I keep reading that sentence and – wherever you stand politically or if you have never so much as picked up a history book – is language we never, ever imagined we would read.

Shortly after I started writing this Monday morning at 6:00, a helicopter flew over my home, which is just off of 16th Street in Washington, DC, and consequential because it is at the DC-Maryland border. Helicopters are not permitted to hover over Washington DC, so the airspace over our otherwise tranquil neighborhood is prime space for news and military helicopters that want unobstructed views of the Capitol during demonstrations. During the summer, when the peaceful #BlackLivesMatter protests occurred, they hovered and hovered MASH-like for days, deep into the following mornings. On Wednesday, January 6th, a day that will live in infamy, the skies were virtually empty. With apologies to singer songwriter John Gorka, the “presence of their absence” was deafening.

There is no perfect political solution to our current dilemma. Censure might pass and, though serious, is the mildest of rebukes. The 25th Amendment has promise due to its relative speed, but requires a timorous Vice President Pence to do what is unthinkable for him. Impeachment is powerful but late, long and divisive. And, of course, it isn't just the President who has gone off the rails. One hundred and forty-seven Republican Senators and House Members voted not to certify the election of Joe Biden *after* the [attack on the Capitol](#).

What were they thinking? Playing with fire before the house burns down is at least vaguely understandable – but afterwards?

The fastest way to a politician's soul is through their wallet. Even before the armed and organized mob seized the Capitol, one publication – the investigative [Popular Information](#) – had figured that out.

Starve the beast.

When I was asked to write a [column](#) last Wednesday night – with the Capitol still reeling from the assault, leaving broken glass, graffiti, stolen artifacts and feces in its wake, and the death of a Capitol Police officer not yet reported – my first thought was how this political tragedy would quickly morph to a [boardroom](#) concern. And it has.

Led by Blue Cross Blue Shield and Marriott and followed by JP Morgan, Citi, Dow Chemical, American Express, the PGA of America, Twitter, Facebook and dozens more, corporations across America are announcing limitations on political donations, access to their platforms and cancellation of high-profile events. As I [mentioned to CNN](#) last night, this shift is historic. At this moment of national existential crisis, we have turned to capitalists, as well as politicians, to help solve our most pressing problems.

A critical point here of gentle warning – those companies that are pausing *all* political donations to both parties rather than just the 147 Republicans, led by Senators Josh Hawley (MO) and Ted Cruz (TX) – who incited these tragic events – are employing old-line thinking for a radical new moment.

Heretofore, contributions to both parties were smart business, political and CSR decisions for most companies, though IBM found it helpful to stay out of the contribution game entirely, as founder Thomas Watson directed more than a century ago. Today is different. As the country and the GOP cleave, it is anything but leadership to punish both parties and believe it will be well received by history let alone tomorrow. Already, the powerfully effective [Lincoln Project](#) is

preparing to “out” corporations who continue to fund the “the 147.”

A pox on both your houses is not an effective strategy.

This was not a protest that broke into a riot. As is clear by the planning, sophisticated weaponry and shocking videos of brutality against law enforcement and the hunting down of politicians, this was an army of mutineers that paused for a protest.

“I’m a firm supporter of the First Amendment. This was none of that. This was criminal riotous activity.”

–Resigning Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund

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