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Less Popular: Bush or Impeachment?

[Opinion] Impeach for no other reason than justice

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"Do we have a baby coming?"

That is reportedly how newbie House Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) answered her first phone call of the early morning on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2006. The voice on the line was not bringing news of the bundle of joy she was expecting. It wasn't her daughter Alexandra with overdue news of the birth of a sixth grandchild.

The 10-term lawmaker most likely wouldn't have answered in such a peculiar way had she known that the caller was a White House aide. President Bush congratulated Pelosi on her impending ascendancy to the Speaker of the House position following the "something, anything, everything blue" mid-term election voter referendum that had handed her Democratic Party the House majority.

"Pack your bags, Mr. President!" was one greeting apparently not under consideration. Pelosi had made very clear on CBS' "60 Minutes" and in other venues that the impeachment of Bush and Cheney wasn't going to be pursued. According to Pelosi "... making them lame ducks was good enough for me."

Pelosi does not, however hold dictatorial powers over "The People's House," and although she can oppose and resist the

filing of articles of impeachment against President Bush, Vice President Cheney and/or other cabinet

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Poll

Q How worried are you about the



officials, she could not stop impeachment from gaining official consideration should the American people demand it of their representatives.

The president's job approval ratings have continued to fall since MSNBC ran a story about polls showing Bush and his party "mired in political quicksand" last November. USA/Gallup polls showed an additional 3 percent drop in reaction to Bush's "surge" speech on Jan. 10 of this year in which the President called for an escalation of troop levels in Iraq.

Some polls show the President's approval rating at a new low of 30 percent. This nadir marks exactly one third of the 90 percent zenith he reached from atop a pile of Manhattan rubble for a prime photo op in September of 2001.

Impeachment is not intended to be a popularity contest. Neither should it be a partisan weapon to be wielded as political retribution nor as a stepping stone to power. Pelosi's reticence to pursue it from her second position in the line of succession to the Presidency should both Executives above her step down or be removed is understandable and wise.

That said, the reasons for Bush's plummeting popularity are inextricably intertwined with parallel falls in approval of his handling of the threat of domestic terrorism, his inattention to homeland security, other domestic needs and the hugely unpopular Iraq War. Strong disapproval of his warrant-less wiretapping, torture and other Constitutional and legal compromises and violations have further undermined his support.

Conversely, what has been steadily growing is the opinion that President Bush lacks credibility and has proven unworthy of the trust of the citizens on whose behalf he swore to "faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States..." and to "...preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Underscoring all of these growing citizen complaints is the question of whether a President who has proven himself incapable of staying within the constraints of the law, unwilling to be forthright to the American people and to Congress and not interested in any advice he disagrees with -- even from his own military commanders -- can be trusted with another two years at the helm of our nation.

An Ipsos poll commissioned by grassroots coalition AfterDowningStreet.org found that 50 percent agreed with the statement: "If President Bush did not tell the truth about his reasons for going to war with Iraq, Congress should consider holding him accountable by impeaching him."

In a less scientific ongoing online poll conducted by MSNBC, 87 percent of over 390,000

H1N1 influenza virus?

- ☐ Very worried
- ☐ Somewhat worried
- ☐ Not yet
- ☐ Not at all

* Vote to see the result.

▶ vote

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WITH YOU

respondents to date have answered the question: "Do you believe President Bush's actions justify impeachment?" by choosing: "Yes, between the secret spying, the deceptions leading to war and more, there is plenty to justify putting him on trial."

Other polls with a variety of wording over the last half of 2006 showed that between 30-42 percent of Americans favor impeachment of the President. Two polls showed that 42-45 percent favored Senator Russ Feingold's call to censure or formally reprimand President Bush over the warrant-less wiretapping program that got little to no support from his peers in Congress.

On Dec. 8 of last year, in the waning hours of the 109th Congress, Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) introduced House Resolution 1106 calling for the impeachment of Bush, Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. It was comprised of three Articles, focusing on violations of their oaths of office to protect and defend the Constitution, manipulation of prewar intelligence and lying to justify war as well as illegal domestic spying.

The Resolution had no hope of any real consideration by the House under the Republican majority, but the point was made. Outgoing Speaker Dennis Hastert had no power to keep the resolution from being initiated and referred it to the Judiciary Committee where it expired at the final gavel. The Resolution remains as a part of the permanent Congressional Record in the Library of Congress.

The new Majority Leader of the House Judiciary Committee, John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI) had introduced a similar Resolution a year earlier with 38 cosponsors knowing full well it would go nowhere in the GOP-controlled House. Additionally, Conyers and his staff published a 287-page book entitled: George W. Bush versus the U.S. Constitution in which multiple impeachable offenses were codified.

Conyers has since changed course -- at least in public -- agreeing with Pelosi "that impeachment is off the table" on his ConyersBlog, saying: "Instead, we agree that oversight, accountability and checks and balances -- which have been sorely lacking for the last six years ? must occur."

As Congress reconvened earlier this month, the House Rules Package for the 110th Congress was ratified, including Thomas Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Practice as a supplement to its standing rules within which the procedure for the initiation of impeachment is laid out.

The relative authority of the various methods by which impeachment can or must be initiated in the United States is debatable. The initiation of impeachment proceedings based upon this document however, has historical and legal precedent. According to Jefferson's Manual:

"In the House there are various methods of setting an impeachment in motion: by charges made on the floor on the responsibility of a Member or Delegate by charges preferred by a memorial, which is usually referred to a committee for examination; by a resolution dropped in the hopper by a Member and referred to a committee; by a message from the President; by charges transmitted from the legislature of a State or territory or from a grand jury; or from facts developed and reported by an investigating committee of the House."

Impeachment of the 43rd president of the United States of America has been or is being pursued by every one of those means -- with the obvious exception of "by a message from the President." Despite his known penchant for malapropisms and creative use of the English language, enactment of this clause by the President against himself is highly unlikely.

With it becoming increasingly apparent that there is no draw-down or end in sight for the Iraq War with Bush remaining in power, and an imminent attack on Iran sounding increasingly less like a rumor and more like a plan -- with nuclear bunker-busters possibly to be used, more and more Americans are deciding that neither our nation, the rest of the world, Alexandra's daughter, nor her mom can afford to risk two more years with this President in power.

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