

27 Aug 2018

Rep. Adam Schiff
Rep. Jerry Nadler
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressmen,

This letter is asking you not to initiate or support impeachment proceedings against President Trump. Obviously, the context assumes that we (Democrats) will win control of the House in the next election, where I expect you to be Chairs of Intelligence and Judiciary Committees, respectively. I ask this despite agreeing that Trump is a disgrace to our country and the office of President, and undoubtedly guilty of "high crimes and misdemeanors," deserving of impeachment and removal from office. He has been awful, and we appreciate all your efforts opposing him.

But, replacing him with (and thereby legitimizing) VP Mike Pence would be worse. Bringing in a fundamentalist zealot with an ideological agenda would loosen a whole new set of problems, bigotry, and division for the country to overlay on our current narrative. Better we have Trump, checked by Democratic House (and, one hopes, Senate as well) to muddle through until 2020. It's a Hobson's choice, but painful and divisive impeachment proceedings creating either a Trump resignation or a Senate trial followed by a Pence Presidency is far scarier. This is not 1973, Pence is no Gerald Ford.

I am sure you are familiar with the New Yorker article describing him as a puppet to corporate and other right-wing interests – notably the Koch brothers:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/23/the-danger-of-president-pence>

I am also sure you are familiar with Pence's statement: "I am a Christian, a Conservative, a Republican – in that order." Where does that leave our country? His moralizing, ideological agenda would be a burden too great on top of that we are already bearing under Trump.

If we win the House and not the Senate, then Trump's removal from office following impeachment would be extremely unlikely. If we win the House and the Senate, it would likely take most of the two years remaining in the Trump Presidency to have and win a Senate trial. Then we would have a President Pence – perhaps with a chance to win in 2020. If impeachment becomes likely (even without a possible Senate conviction), Trump, like Nixon, might resign – leaving us again with now even a more dangerous Pence Presidency.

The best course for Democrats, if they win Congress, is to govern well and prove that government can work – restoring American confidence in good government and setting the stage for a Democrat Presidential win in 2020. We all want Trump gone – but not with a President Pence. Please be careful.

Sincerely,



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P.S. Not that it matters, but I have met both of you personally – you, Adam, many times as a Pasadena constituent and in connection with my Congressional testimony and leadership of The Planetary Society, and you, Rep. Nadler just once when I was the Executive Director and Co-Founder (with Carl Sagan) of The Planetary Society.