

UNDERSTANDING IMPEACHMENT

Impeachment is not conviction. To impeach does not mean to remove from office. Impeachment is the equivalent of indictment; it is the determination that sufficient evidence of wrongdoing exists to warrant a trial (in this case, to bring a public official to trial). According to the Constitution:

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors. (Article II, section 4)

The House of Representatives . . . shall have the sole Power of Impeachment. (Article I, section 2)

The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, and Punishment, according to Law. (Article I, section 3)

What does the Constitution mean, exactly? How is it to be interpreted? What “other high crimes and misdemeanors” did the Framers have in mind? The debate rages on. To help you understand impeachment and the conflicting arguments about what constitutes “impeachable offenses”, the views of three qualified commentators follow.