

The uphill battle towards Trump's second impeachment



Following last week's insurrection at the Capitol, the House of Representatives is likely to vote on Wednesday to impeach President Donald Trump for a second time. Julie Norman explains what impeachment means and what the best course of action for Democrats might be now.

What is Trump being impeached for?

The House [resolution](#) introduced by Democrats on Monday charges Trump with "incitement of insurrection." Specifically, the resolution cites Trump's repeated false claims of election fraud, his 2 January [call](#) with Georgia election officials imploring them to "find" more votes, and most significantly, his speech to supporters on 6 January that preceded the storming of the Capitol. The resolution states that Trump's actions threatened the integrity of the democratic system, undermined a peaceful transition of power to President-elect Joe Biden, and imperilled another branch of government. It also cites [Section 3](#) of the 14th amendment which prohibits any person who has "engaged in insurrection" against the United States from holding office.

What happens next?

The resolution already has 218 co-sponsors, enough to pass the House by a simple majority, which would make Trump the first President to be impeached twice. However, impeachment alone does not remove a president from power; that requires a trial and 2/3 (67) vote in the Senate, which will be an uphill battle in terms of both time and political will. The Senate will not reconvene until January 19th – the day before Biden's inauguration – so it is all but impossible to remove Trump from office before his time in office expires.

However, most Democrats feel that the process is still warranted and necessary to hold the president accountable and set a precedent that such actions will not be tolerated. More pragmatically, Democrats hope a guilty verdict, even after Trump's term expires, could bar him from holding office in the future. However, it is uncertain if Democrats could get at least 17 Republican senators to convict the president; even those who disapprove of his actions may be hesitant to vote against him in an impeachment trial, especially as over [80 percent](#) of Republican voters oppose such a move.

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Julie Norman of UCL writes on the uphill battle towards Trump's second impeachment.

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What does this mean for Biden?

President-elect Biden has deferred to Congress to pursue the course of action they best see fit, but he has not thrown his weight behind impeachment. If a Senate impeachment trial were to start on the very day Biden takes office, there are serious concerns that it could impede swift confirmation of his Cabinet nominees whom he is keen to have in place, and also hinder any movement on legislation that Biden views as crucial for addressing the pandemic and economic recovery.

Biden is reportedly exploring options to [split](#) Senate business, so that days could be split between his agenda and impeachment proceedings. Another option would be for the House to [hold](#) on to the articles of impeachment until several weeks or months into Biden's term to delay the trial, though that would also likely be disruptive.

On a broader level, there are also concerns that impeachment could further [divide](#) both lawmakers and the country, deepening polarisation, further fueling Trump's base, and undermining Biden's campaign promise of unity and healing. [Biden](#) is so far trying to use the 6 January riot to underscore the necessity of bringing the country together. But what already was a difficult task will likely be an uphill battle.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USAPP– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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About the author



Julie Norman – UCL

Dr Julie Norman (@DrJulieNorman2) is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at University College London (UCL), and a researcher at UCL's Centre for US Politics (@CUSP_ucl).