

public office again, and after everything we have seen this week, I hope, I pray, and I believe that he will meet the unambiguous rejection by the American people.

Six hours after the attack on January 6, after the carnage and mayhem was shown on every television screen in America, President Trump told his supporters to “Remember this day forever.” I ask the American people to heed his words. Remember that day forever but not for the reasons the former President intended. Remember the panic in the voices over the radio dispatch, the rhythmic pounding of fists and flags at the Chamber doors. Remember the crack of a solitary gunshot. Remember the hateful and racist Confederate flag flying through the halls of our Union. Remember the screams of the bloody officer crushed between the onrushing mob and a doorway to the Capitol, his body trapped in the breach. Remember three Capitol Police officers who lost their lives. Remember that those rioters actually succeeded in delaying Congress from certifying the election. Remember how close our democracy came to ruin.

My fellow Americans, remember that day, January 6, forever, the final, terrible legacy of the 45th President of the United States and undoubtedly our worst. Let it live on in infamy, a stain on Donald John Trump that can never, never be washed away.

On Monday we will recognize Presidents Day. Part of the commemoration in the Senate will be the annual reading of Washington’s Farewell Address. Aside from winning the Revolutionary War, I consider it his greatest contribution to American civil life, and it had nothing to do with the words he spoke but the example it set.

Washington’s Farewell Address established for all time that no one had the right to the Office of the Presidency, that it belonged to the people. What an amazing legacy. What an amazing gift to the future generations, the knowledge that this country will always be greater than any one person, even our most renowned. That is why Members of both parties take turns reading Washington’s address once a year in full into the RECORD, to pledge common attachment to the selflessness at the core of our democratic system.

This trial was about the final acts of a President who represents the very antithesis of our first President and sought to place one man before the entire country: himself.

Let the record show—let the record show before God, history, and the solemn oath we swear to the Constitution that there was only one correct verdict in this trial: guilty. And I pray that while justice was not done in this trial, it will be carried forward by the American people, who, above any of us in this Chamber, determine the destiny of our great Nation.

I yield the floor.

(Mr. PADILLA assumed the Chair.)

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The Republican leader is recognized.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, January 6 was a disgrace. American citizens attacked their own government. They used terrorism to try to stop a specific piece of domestic business they did not like. Fellow Americans beat and bloodied our own police. They stormed the Senate floor. They tried to hunt down the Speaker of the House. They built a gallows and chanted about murdering the Vice President. They did this because they had been fed wild falsehoods by the most powerful man on Earth because he was angry he lost an election.

Former President Trump’s actions preceding the riot were a disgraceful—disgraceful—dereliction of duty.

The House accused the former President of “incitement.” That is a specific term from the criminal law.

Let me just put that aside for a moment and reiterate something I said weeks ago. There is no question—none—that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day. No question about it. The people who stormed this building believed they were acting on the wishes and instructions of their President, and having that belief was a foreseeable consequence of the growing crescendo of false statements, conspiracy theories, and reckless hyperbole which the defeated President kept shouting into the largest megaphone on planet Earth.

The issue is not only the President’s intemperate language on January 6. It is not just his endorsement of remarks in which an associate urged “trial by combat.” It was also the entire manufactured atmosphere of looming catastrophe; the increasingly wild myths—myths—about a reverse landslide election that was somehow being stolen in some secret coup by our now-President.

Now, I defended the President’s right to bring any complaints to our legal system. The legal system spoke. The electoral college spoke. As I stood up and said clearly at that time, the election was settled. It was over. But that just really opened a new chapter of even wilder—wilder—and more unfounded claims.

The leader of the free world cannot spend weeks thundering that shadowy forces are stealing our country and then feign surprise when people believe him and do reckless things.

Now, sadly, many politicians sometimes make overheated comments or use metaphors—we saw that—that unhinged listeners might take literally, but that was different. That is different from what we saw. This was an intensifying crescendo of conspiracy theories, orchestrated by an outgoing

President who seemed determined to either overturn the voters’ decision or else torch our institutions on the way out.

The unconscionable behavior did not end when the violence actually began. Whatever our ex-President claims he thought might happen that day, whatever reaction he says he meant to produce, by that afternoon, we know he was watching the same live television as the rest of us. A mob was assaulting the Capitol in his name. These criminals were carrying his banners, hanging his flags, and screaming their loyalty to him.

It was obvious that only President Trump could end this. He was the only one who could. Former aides publicly begged him to do so. Loyal allies frantically called the administration. The President did not act swiftly. He did not do his job. He didn’t take steps so Federal law could be faithfully executed and order restored. No. Instead, according to public reports, he watched television happily—happily—as the chaos unfolded. He kept pressing his scheme to overturn the election.

Now, even after it was clear to any reasonable observer that Vice President Pence was in serious danger, even as the mob carrying Trump banners was beating cops and breaching perimeters, the President sent a further tweet attacking his own Vice President. Now, predictably and foreseeably under the circumstances, members of the mob seemed to interpret this as a further inspiration to lawlessness and violence, not surprisingly.

Later, even when the President did halfheartedly begin calling for peace, he didn’t call right away for the riot to end. He did not tell the mob to depart until even later. And even then, with police officers bleeding and broken glass covering Capitol floors, he kept repeating election lies and praising the criminals.

In recent weeks, our ex-President’s associates have tried to use the 74 million Americans who voted to reelect him as a kind of human shield against criticism—using the 74 million who voted for him as kind of a human shield against criticism. Anyone who decries his awful behavior is accused of insulting millions of voters. That is an absurd deflection. Seventy-four million Americans did not invade the Capitol. Hundreds of rioters did. Seventy-four million Americans did not engineer the campaign of disinformation and rage that provoked it. One person did it—just one.

Now, I have made my view of this episode very plain. But our system of government gave the Senate a specific task. The Constitution gives us a particular role. This body is not invited to act as the Nation’s overarching moral tribunal. We are not free to work backward from whether the accused party might personally deserve some kind of punishment.

Justice Joseph Story was our Nation’s first great constitutional scholar. As he explained nearly 200 years