

# Former congressman Stearns writes history lesson on presidential impeachment

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Former U.S. Rep. Clifford B. Stearns has published a book unique in both its format and timeliness: the daily diary he kept during the 1998 impeachment of former President Bill Clinton by the House of Representatives.

“Inside Impeachment—Diary of a Congressman: Lessons Learned,” gives commentary on the daunting burden of proof required to impeach a president. It’s easy for the reader to draw parallels about the lessons Stearns learned through the impeachment of Clinton to the recent impeachments of the 45th president, Donald J. Trump.

Stearns, a Republican, represented Florida's 6th District, which then included portions of Marion County, from 1989 to 2013. The district was reconfigured after the 2010 census into the 3rd District, which includes part of Marion

“For many readers today, the impeachment of Bill Clinton is just a vague memory. For me, it was one of several defining moments in my lifetime, and I realize that my perspective is probably unique,” he said. “My hope is that even in our current political climate, the reader will see what made the impeachment of President William Jefferson Clinton possible, and the extraordinary burden of proof for ‘high crimes and misdemeanors’ that must be met to make a presidential impeachment even remotely possible,” he continued.

“To put President Clinton's impeachment into perspective, only two presidents have been impeached in United States history before Donald Trump was impeached twice. Andrew Johnson, who succeeded to the presidency following President Abraham Lincoln's assassination. As it turns out, neither of the two impeached presidents—Johnson nor Clinton—was convicted by the Senate,” Stearns writes in the prologue.

The book also reminds readers of how much Marion County's political landscape has changed. When Stearns was elected in 1989 as a Republican, Marion County was primarily made up of Democrat voters. Stearns' book issues a warning that we should seek to “prevent the instrument of impeachment from becoming a continuous weapon of political power.”

Additionally, he encourages the support of a vibrant free press as the foundation of a free society so as to thwart domestic factions and insurrection, “including the weaponization of impeachment by one political party.”

“We must push for a free press of many voices and respect their diverse sources for the liberalization of the truth,” he said. “As much as we dislike the various news and social media outlets/organizations, depending on your politics, it is necessary to have as many ‘factions’

available to prevent the majority from overcoming the minority on their subjective positions.”

According to a press release issued by the book publisher, Archway Publishing, Stearns now is an executive director of APCO Worldwide, a Washington, D.C.-based public relations firm, and serves as a member of APCO’s International Advisory Council. Stearns recently served as the president of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, which is made up of 500 former senators and congressmen.

While in Congress, his various pieces of legislation were signed by four presidents. These measures include the creation of a “Do Not Call List” to prevent nuisance phone calls, the Millennium Healthcare for Veterans, the placing of defibrillators in public sectors, and the return to the State of Florida 87,000 acres of federal land that established a greenbelt across Florida from Jacksonville to the Gulf Coast. Prior to being elected to Congress, Stearns was a business owner of motels and restaurants.

Stearns is a graduate of the George Washington University with a degree in electrical engineering. Stearns was a captain in the Air Force and served four years as an aerospace project engineer providing satellite reconnaissance of Vietnam where he was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal for distinguished service and meritorious achievement.

Later, as a congressman, Stearns received the Air Force Association W. Stuart Symington Award, the highest honor presented to a civilian in the field of national security. Stearns lives in Ocala with his wife, Joan. They have three grown sons.

“Inside Impeachment” is available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble

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# INSIDE IMPEACHMENT DIARY OF A CONGRESSMAN

LESSONS LEARNED

Honorable Clifford B. Stearns

