

Inside Impeachment: Diary of a Congressman

Honorable Clifford B. Stearns

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In an era of political party chaos and vituperation, when the law is often used as a weapon against political enemies rather than as an impartial standard to uphold, Clifford B. Stearns' *Inside Impeachment* is a timely, compelling, and thought-provoking book.

Stearns, a Florida congressman for 24 years (1988-2012), kept a diary during the four months surrounding the 1998 impeachment of President Bill Clinton on charges of perjury, obstructing justice, and abuse of power. The scandal resulted from the president's extra-marital affair with then-intern Monica Lewinsky, and his subsequent efforts to deny and cover up the story.

Stearns' diary — followed by an afterword and multiple appendices of official documents, speeches, and newspaper articles — gives an honest, sobering view of what happened inside the House during those tumultuous days, covering the investigation, partisan discussions, and the triumph of party politics over the law. Stearns shows the perspectives and motivations behind both sides of the impeachment argument, putting readers in the meeting rooms and halls of Congress as silent witnesses.

More than just a diary of one impeachment, Stearns's book also puts the impeachment process in perspective: from its history to its uses against President Donald Trump to its misunderstandings by the general public. Stearns warns that the "troubling trend" of presidential impeachment is not just its weaponization by the majority party, but also its fecklessness against a popular president. "Our democracy depends on our elected officials to act as public servants rather than as private citizens," Stearns writes. "But, in the end, voters have the responsibility to learn the issues and not be persuaded by social media and biased print and TV media."

.....this is a riveting, balanced, and in many ways disturbing book about the state of America's partisan politics and the danger of an uninformed electorate.

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