

# [***Is Impeachment The New Normal? Experts Say It Could Be Used Once Every Other President As GOP Launches Biden Inquiry.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:695T-7S21-JBCM-F53X-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 1610 words

**Byline:** Mary Whitfill Roeloffs, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** The House GOP launched an impeachment inquiry into Biden, setting the stage for what could be the third attempt to oust a president in just four years.

**Body**

**Topline**

House Republicans started an impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden this week, launching what could be the third effort to impeach a president in just four years leaving experts surveyed by**Forbes** split on whether tit-for-tat impeachments will become commonplace, as party divides deepen and a once-rarely used process becomes a partisan tool.

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Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) announces a formal impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden during a news conference at the U.S. Capitol on September 12, 2023 in Washington, D.C.

The Washington Post via Getty Images

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**Key Facts**

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) directed three House committees to open an impeachment inquiry into Biden and his family s business dealingson Tuesday, which isn t automatically a precursor to impeachment but could set the stage for one after Trump was impeached in 2019 for allegedly pressuring the Ukrainian president to investigate Biden and other Democrats, and again in 2021 after the January 6 Capitol riots.

Larry Sabato, founder and director of the Center for ***Politics*** at the University of Virginia, told**Forbes**the extreme political polarization of today means "we can expect to see impeachment used more frequently especially because a conviction won t happen." Sabato said he doesn't envision either party having the necessary two-thirds vote of the Senate to convict and eject a sitting president anytime soon, and warned using impeachment for "partisan amusement" has weakened the U.S. presidency.

Jeffrey Berry, a professor emeritus of political science at Tufts University, said there is a good chance we will see impeachment proceedings again down the line, contributing to what he called an increasingly unstable democracy he said moving toward impeaching Biden in retaliation for Trump s impeachments is a reflection of a larger cultural, antagonistic divide that is showing no signs of receding.

Laura Blessing a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Government Affairs Institute said the impeachment attempt is indicative of a weak Speaker of the House who is trying to keep promises to the most extreme members of his party, and noted increased use of what is meant to be a sad and serious task as a political exercise could become commonplace if party leaders continue to benefit from division.

Frank Luntz, a conservative pollster and Trump critic who offered advice to GOP candidates in the leadup to Democratic President Bill Clinton s impeachment, called impeachment the latest and ugliest tool in the political shed and said the once-rare process now feels like it will be used once every other president.

Frank Bowman, author of the book **High Crimes and Misdemeanors: A History of Impeachment for the Age of Trump,**said he thinks the political system is at risk of seeing an increasing number of impeachment attempts: If we re stumbling into an era where impeachment efforts become the norm, it will be simply because it is a Republican phenomenon, he said, but "that s not to say that if the shoe gets on the other foot, Democrats are so inherently virtuous that they won t pursue it themselves."

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U.S. President Joe Biden listens to shouted questions regarding impeachment during a meeting of his Cancer Cabinet at the White House on September 13, 2023 in Washington, DC.

Getty Images

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**Crucial Quote**

Impeachment as a serious constitutional mechanism is in grave disarray, Bowman said. The only way impeachment becomes a meaningful threat for actual removal is to repair the political system.

**Key Background**

The Constitution says officials can be impeached for Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors. Even the founding fathers differed on the appropriate process and reasons for removing a dangerous executive power,historians say, but they ultimately agreed that a president should be impeachable for constitutional abuses and to preserve the integrity of the government and the law. Historically, the tool has been rarely used and only three presidents have been impeached in American history: Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1998 and Donald Trump twice. Richard Nixon in 1974 and John Tyler in 1842 were both the subjects of impeachment proceedings, but Nixon resigned before a House vote and Tyler's impeachment resolution did not pass. In the modern-day impeachments of Trump and Clinton, the votes to impeach were largely partisan. Only five Democrats in the House voted to impeach Clinton on two charges related to the Monica Lewinsky affair, and all but a dozen Republicans fell in line 5 voted against the perjury charge and 12 against obstruction of justice. Only three Democrats broke rank and voted against the impeachment of Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in 2019, and not a single House Republican voted for either article, though Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) voted to convict Trump on one count. In 2021, every Democrat and 10 Republicans voted to impeach, and seven Senate Republicans voted with 50 Democrats to convict Trump.

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A woman reads the front page of the December 19, 2019 New York Times with its headline reporting the impeachment of U.S. President Donald Trump by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Getty Images

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**Contra**

Simon Rosenberg, founder of the liberal New Policy Institute, said he disagrees that impeachment will become the newest tool in the political chest, and said Republicans attempt to equate the crimes committed by Trump to any actions by Biden is a distortion of what s happening here. Rosenberg argued the lack of evidence in Biden s impeachment inquiry he called the effort frivolous could actually reduce the use of presidential eviction as a political tool. I ve been surprised by how aggressive the statements by Republican senators against this attempt have been, he said. Some have publicly noted how ridiculous this is, and there is a chance this actually raises the bar for what can be considered impeachable in the future.

**Tangent**

Sabato called the Biden probe retaliation following the impeachments of Trump, something others have said is largely unprecedented. Rosenberg said there was little partisan blowback when President Bill Clinton was impeached more than 20 years ago, nor in 1974 when Congress was close to impeaching Nixon. Bowman said it is possible the Clinton impeachment had echos of retaliation from the Nixon outster He was the embodiment of the young, long-haired, dope-smoking image conservatives despised during the Nixon era, he said but that any connection between the two was certainly faint. Similarly, Rosenberg said: There was no retribution to (George W. Bush) because of Clinton s impeachment.

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US President Bill Clinton, center, addresses the nation 19 December from the White House after the US House of Representatives impeached him on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice.

AFP via Getty Images

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**News Peg**

McCarthysaid Tuesdayhe had instructed the House Judiciary, Oversight and Ways and Means committees to open a formal impeachment inquiry into Biden. Among the accusations brought by Republicans are claims the president benefitted from his son Hunter Biden s foreign business interests and had phone calls and dinners with Hunter s business partners, and an unconfirmed allegation that a Ukrainian energy CEO paid the Biden family $10 million to help remove a Ukrainian corruption prosecutor. The bribery claim has not been proven, and Biden has long denied any involvement in his son s business dealings. Evidence has not emerged that Biden broke the law or financially benefited from his son s activity. McCarthy did not explicitly call for Biden to be impeached, but said the allegations warrant further investigation. Members of the far right have threatened to call for McCarthy s removal if he doesn't back a Biden impeachment inquiry. Meanwhile, some House Republicans have said they are against impeaching Biden, calling the demands for an inquiry "absurd" (Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado) andcalling for"more concrete evidence" (Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska).

**What To Watch For**

The next step in the process would be for McCarthy to call for a vote to formalize the inquiry, and the Judiciary Committee would then need to draft articles of impeachment. The House would have to approve them with a majority vote, which would formally impeach the president. The Senate would then need a two-thirds vote to remove Biden, which is unlikely in the Democratic-controlled chamber.

**What We Don t Know**

How impeachment will impact Republicans' political fortunes. Rosenberg called the move a strategic disaster for the Republican party, adding it pushes them further and further away from the issues that matter to voters. Berry, however, said those pushing for Biden s removal are largely representing their hard-right constituents, who want to hear their legislators talk about impeachment on the campaign trail. He said the inquiry will be a boon for conservatives in conservative districts, but will likely not appeal to the wider conservative base, nor will it help Republicans win Congressional seats this fall.

**Further Reading**

House GOP Launching Impeachment Inquiry Into Joe Biden, McCarthy Says(**Forbes**)

Biden Impeachment Inquiry: All The Allegations Against The President Leveled By House GOP, Explained (**Forbes**)

Biden Impeachment Inquiry: Here s How The Process Could Play Out And How It Could End(**Forbes**)

House Avoids Impeaching Biden, Rebuking Hard-Right Boebert In Latest Display Of GOP Divisions(Forbes)

**Load-Date:** September 15, 2023

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