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**Capitol View
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**Punishing Senator Sasse Is Not Necessary**

As a registered independent, party loyalty has never impacted my decision at the ballot box. In fact, all of us are probably independent enough to vote for the person instead of the party.

We have no guarantee that the person we vote for will conduct business exactly as we would. We tend to look for values similar to ours and trust that any votes the elected official makes will be based on more information than we have and will generally fulfill at least some of the rationale we used when we voted to elect the person.

Sadly, partisan politics has skewed some of that on the local, state and national stage. As a nonpartisan, it’s easy to sit outside the sandbox and lob a clod of dirt in whatever direction. It’s even easier to get up and leave the sandbox and decry that it’s not our mess.

It is with that in mind that I approach the aftermath of the election for President of the United States and the second impeachment trial of Donald Trump. As with his previous trial, partisan politics played a deciding role in the outcome. But (horror of horrors), seven Republican U.S. Senate members broke ranks and voted with the Democrats (gasp) for impeachment. It did not affect the final acquittal.

But, it obviously rankled enough Republican nerves that the “seven” have been called out. Nebraska’s Ben Sasse, a Republican, has been targeted for censure. That’ll teach him, eh Mildred? NOT.

In my humble opinion, it’s just another waste of partisan time. Sasse and the other six were elected and sworn to uphold their duties to the U.S. Constitution, not the Republican Party.

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If we were paying attention, we’d know that seven years ago – election night 2014 -- Sasse “promised Nebraskans I’d always vote my conscience even if it was against the partisan stream." Just months later, in his first speech in the Senate, “I promised to speak out when a president — even of my own party — exceeds his or her powers. I cannot go back on my word, and Congress cannot lower our standards on such a grave matter, simply because it is politically convenient."

The recently re-elected Senator from Nebraska also warned about what the Senate's second acquittal of Trump would mean. "A weak and timid Congress will increasingly submit to an emboldened and empowered presidency," he said. "That’s unacceptable. This institution needs to respect itself enough to tell the executive that some lines cannot be crossed."

So it was that Sasse voted to convict Donald Trump in the former president's second impeachment trial.

Ultimately, the 57-43 vote fell short of the two-thirds requirement to convict Trump on charges that he incited an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

It doesn’t matter that I might not have voted the way he did. What matters the most is that Sasse kept his word to vote his conscience, even against the partisan stream. Yes, I am aware that all 50 Senate Democrats probably voted the partisan line. But I have no input in their decisions. Sasse and his colleague Deb Fischer, also a Republican, are the ones I can reach out to with my concerns.

Remember, both of them voted to acquit Trump during his first impeachment. But only Fischer voted for acquittal this time. Perhaps she is more concerned about facing the party crowd back home. She hasn’t said and I haven’t asked.

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Sasse is realistic enough to admit that “If we were talking about a Democratic president, most Republicans and most Democrats would simply swap sides. Tribalism is a hell of a drug, but our oath to the Constitution means we’re constrained to the facts."

I wish that more of the so-called party regulars would come to that realization. Tribalism is a drug and not always one with a good outcome.

Instead of “punishing” Sasse, we should be thankful for his honesty and commitment to defending the Constitution. Of course, that doesn’t grab headlines. Maybe it should.

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