

**Congress**

Republican effort to censure Adam Schiff halted

The censure resolution was introduced by Arizona Republican Andy Biggs, who leads the House Freedom Caucus



House Republicans' attempt to censure Intelligence Chairman Adam B. Schiff, D-Calif., was tabled Monday. (Photo By Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call)

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House Republicans tried to force a vote Monday evening to censure House Intelligence Chairman Adam B. Schiff (https://www.rollcall.com/members?7266&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink), accusing the California Democrat of purposely misleading the public in his comments on the Intelligence Committee's interactions with a whistleblower whose complaint sparked the impeachment inquiry.

The House voted 218-185 on a motion from House Majority Leader Steny H. Royer (https://www.rollcall.com/members?230&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink) to table, or dispose with, the censure effort, without a direct vote on the substance of the Republicans' claims.

The censure resolution was introduced by Arizona Republican Andy Biggs (https://www.rollcall.com/members?98219&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink), who leads the House Freedom Caucus, and had the backing of GOP leadership in the House. Biggs and his allies recruited 182 members — all Republicans — to co-sponsor the proposal.

[House Republicans aim to force vote on Schiff censure (<http://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/house-republicans-aim-force-vote-schiff-censure>)]

The proposal alleges what Republicans say is a pattern of misleading and concealed information on the impeachment inquiry from the public and other members of Congress.

Biggs did not waive the reading of the resolution, as is typical. The House clerk read the full text of the measure aloud, detailing the allegations against Schiff.

There was no debate on the resolution.

“Whereas, according to a New York Times article on October 2, 2019, Chairman Schiff’s committee staff met with the whistleblower prior to the filing of his complaint, and staff members communicated the content of the complaint to Chairman Schiff,” the resolution reads.

“Whereas Chairman Schiff concealed his dealings with the whistleblower from the rest of the Intelligence Committee, and when asked directly in a television interview whether he had any contact with the whistleblower, he lied to the American people and said, ‘We have not spoken directly with the whistleblower.’”

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The resolution also takes aim at Schiff’s characterization of a phone call between President Donald Trump and the Ukrainian president during a recent Intelligence Committee hearing.

The resolution claims Schiff “manufactured a false retelling” of the conversation instead of “quoting directly from the available transcript” released by the White House at a Sept. 26 hearing on a whistleblower complaint about the phone call.

Biggs brought up his proposal last week as a privileged resolution, a procedural move that gives the measure precedence over the regular order of business and allows a resolution to leapfrog or interrupt other pending matters before the chamber.

The House was expected to consider the censure resolution last week, but Biggs agreed to delay the vote following the sudden death of House Oversight and Reform Committee Chairman Elijah E. Cummings (https://www.rollcall.com/members?232&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink).

Biggs sent House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (https://www.rollcall.com/members?35&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink), a California Democrat, a letter Thursday saying he did “not wish to intrude on the grief felt by [Cummings’] colleagues today by proceeding with a floor vote of my motion to censure Adam Schiff (https://www.rollcall.com/members?7266&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink).”

While he said he was “sanguine” with the agreement to hold the vote Monday, he noted that he felt it was odd that the impeachment inquiry otherwise proceeded Thursday while his vote was rescheduled.

After the vote, Biggs continued his attacks on Schiff.

“Mr. Schiff may not have been held accountable tonight, but the American people are very much aware of his reckless disregard for the truth. They will not tolerate his calculated words and actions as he continues his secret, unauthorized impeachment inquiry to undermine the will of the American people,” Biggs said.

Pelosi also released a statement following the vote, defending Schiff and calling him “a great American patriot.”

She went on to say the country is “extremely well-served by its serious, smart and strategic leadership,” drawing contrast to Republicans in Congress, who she accused of covering up the truth.

“The American people want the truth. The House will proceed with our impeachment inquiry to find the facts and expose the truth, guided by our Constitution and the facts. This is about patriotism, not politics or partisanship.”

Classically congressional punishment

A censure is a formal, majority vote in the House on a resolution disapproving of a member’s conduct, generally with the additional requirement that the member stand in the well of the chamber and receive a verbal rebuke and reading of the resolution by the speaker.

In January, Illinois Democratic Rep. Bobby Rush (https://www.rollcall.com/members?156&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink) introduced a resolution to censure Iowa Republican Steve King (https://www.rollcall.com/members?15343&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink) for racist comments. The proposal laid out direct quotes by King over the course of 12 years that questioned former President Barack Obama (https://www.rollcall.com/members?7612&utm_source=memberLink?utm_source=memberLink)’s citizenship, compared immigrants to dogs and livestock and referred to “anchor babies.” The House voted to refer the matter to committee rather than censure King.

[House effort on Steve King censure fizzles (<http://www.rollcall.com/news/congress/house-effort-on-steve-king-censure-fizzles>)]

A total of 23 members have been censured in the House for misconduct ranging from using insulting language on the floor to assaulting other lawmakers. More recently, censures have stemmed from behavior such as payroll fraud, sexual misconduct and financial improprieties.

Technically, there are no express consequences in the House rules after a member has been censured.

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