

See Also: Draft Impeachment Resolution Against George W. Bush, 1/17/03

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Santa Cruz to ask Congress to consider impeaching Bush

by Martha Mendoza, AP National Writer

10 September 2003

The Sacramento Bee

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. (AP) - The Santa Cruz City Council has become the first local government in the country to pass a resolution that will call for Congress to look into impeaching President Bush over his handling of the war in Iraq.

"It's time for us to open up this can of worms," said councilman Tim Fitzmaurice.

The resolution, approved Tuesday by a 6-1 vote, authorizes Santa Cruz Mayor Emily Reilly to send a letter to House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner asking if Bush has committed any impeachable offenses that could lead to his ouster.

City leaders say Bush violated international treaties by going to war in Iraq, and that the president manipulated public fears to justify the war and undercut Constitutional rights.

The council vote came in packed chambers where supporters of the resolution lined the walls. Some carried signs that read "Honor the Constitution. Impeachment now" and "God bless and keep Bush out of power."

"I happen to think that what's going on is a high crime and misdemeanor, but let's leave that to the U.S. Congress to decide," said councilman and UC Santa Cruz professor Mike Rotkin.

Such divisive political stands aren't unusual in the coastal town.

A year ago, Santa Cruz became the first of what would swell to 165 city councils to oppose the war against Iraq. Santa Cruz was also one of more than 100 cities declaring its opposition to the Patriot Act. And in April, the city and county of Santa Cruz sued the Drug Enforcement Administration and Attorney General John Ashcroft, marking the first time a public entity has sued the federal government on behalf of patients who need medical marijuana.

White House spokesman Ken Lisaius, responding to Santa Cruz's current proposal, said Tuesday that the president "welcomes the fact that we live in a democracy and that people are free to make their opinions known."

Francis Boyle, a University of Illinois law professor who has founded a national "Impeach Bush" campaign, said local city council resolutions can have a significant impact in grass roots movements. Anti-apartheid resolutions, among others, have sparked policy reforms, he said.

"I think this will take off too, and a lot of cities will give serious consideration to what Santa Cruz has done," he said in advance of the council meeting.

Arcata, another California coastal community about 350 miles to the north, will be considering a similar resolution calling for impeachment next month.

Mark Primack, an architect by trade and the lone voice of opposition on the Santa Cruz City Council, voted against the resolution.

"The truth and the honest truth is that we work better as a city when we focus on city issues," Primack said.

But Boyle said Bush's policies are everyone's issues.

"President Bush wants to waste another \$87 billion in Iraq," he said. "That could pay for a lot of stop signs in Santa Cruz."

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