

**Watergate Presentation 2024
for LDI Symposium on October 10, 2024**

Goal = 15 min

Slide 1: Introduction 1min 5sec

Thank you for the introduction and thank you for this opportunity to talk about the Watergate scandal from the early 1970s and the legacy it left upon our political and cultural history.

Watergate is a huge topic with many moving parts and people and I will do my best to summarize the main points in this brief presentation.

The *Washington Post* reporter, Dan Balz wrote (2022)

Quote:

“Watergate, along with the Vietnam War, marked a dividing line between old and new, ushering in a changed landscape for politics and public life — from a period in which Americans trusted their government to a period in which that trust was broken and never truly restored.”

End quote.

During the Watergate scandal, public officials like Maryland Representative Lawrence J. Hogan, Sr., had to work hard to restore faith in the justice system and the government to protect the welfare of the country.

In this presentation, I will provide a brief overview of the Watergate scandal and how it led the U.S. House of Representatives to initiate the impeachment process against President Richard Nixon in 1973.

I will also discuss Rep. Hogan and the role he played in this historic event.

Slide 2: Background Climate 1min

The Watergate scandal occurred during a time of great social and political unrest due to issues such as the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement.

On the upper left, is a picture of a student protest against the war on the Mckeldin Mall, one of many that occurred across the country, since at the time, there were over 500,000 Americans in Vietnam.

There were issues around desegregation, such as the unpopular school busing program aimed at desegregating schools, as illustrated by this student letter on the lower right, stating that they didn't want to change schools and leave their friends.

In addition, Richard Nixon became president in 1969 and into a government where the executive and legislative branches were greatly divided by the parties. The Nixon administration was also greatly concerned with security leaks of top-secret information following the leaks of the Pentagon Papers.

In this challenging environment, Nixon and his administration were making choices aimed at securing their power, preventing future security leaks, and winning the 1972 presidential election right around the corner.

Slide 3: Watergate Break-In 1min 10sec

In 1972, President Nixon was the incumbent Republican candidate up against the Democratic Senator George McGovern.

The Watergate break-in was the result of a campaign intelligence plan developed by Gordon Liddy, the Finance Counsel on the committee, following Nixon's order to gain any information advantage over his opponents.

There are contradictory statements on who ordered the plan to move forward, but most historians believe that Nixon did not know about the break-in until after the fact.

(Whether it had been approved by Attorney General John Mitchell, later Chairman of CRP), Presidential Counsel John Dean, or Deputy CRP Chairman Jeb Magruder.)

Essentially, the plan was to break into the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Office Building in Washington, D.C, and wire-tap higher-up offices, such as the DNC Chairman, and photograph campaign documents.

Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA officer, oversaw the break-in on June 17, 1972, and it was performed by men shown on the slide. The security guard, Frank Wills, noticed their presence and called the police, and all five burglars were arrested.

Early in the investigation of the Watergate break-in, it was discovered that there was a connection between the burglars and the White House as an address book with the number of Hunt, HH was found with a White House phone number.

Slide 4: White House Involvement 40sec

It wasn't until James McCord, one of the burglars, sent a letter to U. S. District Court Judge John Sirica, stating involvement and pressure from higher officials, did the break-in gained more

public attention and a growing issue for Nixon's administration, since up to this point, the break-in was not seen as a big-deal in consideration of the wider issues that I mentioned earlier.

There were many White House officials involved in the cover-up, some of whom are listed on the slide, and they were later indicted for obstruction of Justice, conspiracy, and perjury.

Other Nixon aides:

- Gordon C. Strachan, Haldeman's aide
- Charles Colson, Special Counsel
- Jeb Stuart Magruder, Acting Chair of CRP
- Robert Mardian, Counsel on CRP
- Kenneth Parkinson, Counsel on CRP

There are many resources to learn more about the Watergate trials and the people involved such as at the National Archives or the Presidential libraries.

Slide 5: Senate Watergate Committee 50sec

The Senate Watergate Committee was established to investigate the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up activities.

Broadcasted nationwide by the major networks, it was revealed during the hearing of Alex Butterfield that there was a tape recording system in the White House.

Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox subpoenaed the White House for the tapes and President Nixon refused, citing executive privilege. This eventually led to what is known as the "Saturday Night Massacre," where both the Attorney General and his Deputy resigned, and Cox was fired by Solicitor General Robert Bork on Nixon's order.

(Attorney General Elliot Richardson, Deputy William French Smith)

The White House and Nixon's efforts to impede the investigation brought into question the legality and constitutional rights of the President's use of "executive privilege."

Slide 6: Impeachment and Rep. Lawrence J. Hogan, Sr. 1min 10sec - slide 6-8

Following over 40 resolutions in the 93rd Congress calling for an investigation and the impeachment of President Nixon, the House Judiciary Committee was given investigative powers to determine the grounds for impeachment against Nixon.

Slide 7: House Judiciary Committee

With 38 members including Rep. Lawrence Hogan, the Committee reviewed the evidence - reading thousands of pages of reports and transcripts, hours of listening to recordings and hearing witness testimonies.

(Estimate from White House Office of Communications: Around 100 staff, 43 lawyers, \$1.17 million spend - Richard Nixon Presidential Library)

Slide 8: Judiciary Committee's Responsibilities

The first step the Committee took was to review the Constitution and historical cases such as the impeachment proceedings against President Andrew Johnson in 1868.

Once the Committee established what can be considered an impeachable offense, they held hearings to question witnesses and the evidence.

Note, that the Committee does not assign guilt, only the Senate can charge the President guilty and remove him from Office.

The impeachment proceedings began on May 9, 1974, and in July, following the U. S. Supreme Court ruling, President Nixon handed over the original tapes and not just edited transcripts.

Slide 9: Articles of Impeachment 30sec

After a lengthy investigation, the Committee charged President Nixon in July 1974 with three articles of Impeachment.

Article I charged him with obstruction of justice

- for impeding the investigation into the Watergate break-in by making false and misleading statements withholding relevant and material information, and "approving, condoning, acquiescing in, and counseling witnesses concerning the giving of false or misleading statements".

Article II charged him with the abuse of power

- and violating the constitutional rights of citizens by obtaining confidential information from the Internal Revenue Service, misuse of federal agencies for non-executive purposes, and failure to faithfully execute the law as required by his office.

Article III charged him with contempt of Congress

- and his failure to cooperate with the House Judiciary Committee's investigation by disobeying subpoenas given three different times by the Committee.

Slide 10: Lawrence J. Hogan, Sr.'s Vote 3 minutes

Notably, Rep. Hogan was the only Republican on the Committee to vote yes to all three articles of impeachment, greatly upsetting the Nixon administration, his party, and his constituents.

Here is a video clip of Hogan's speech before the Judiciary Committee stating why he will vote for impeachment.

(Hogan stated that after reviewing the evidence, he was convinced that the President had “lied repeatedly,” deceived the American people, and interfered with the Watergate investigation. Hogan wrote to his Republican colleagues encouraging them to ignore party lines and to consider the evidence before them for the good of the country.)

As Hogan stated, he received many angry letters following his speech. This clipping on the right was sent to Hogan and it highlights people’s belief that he was a backstabber for going against his party and the President.

Slide 11: Polarizing Responses to Impeachment 45sec

President Nixon won the 1972 election with around a 68% approval rating. But as the hearings and investigations went on, and the eventual release of the original tape recordings, public opinion began to turn and more people believed that Nixon should resign.

Especially once the tape, known as the “Smoking Gun,” was released on August 5, 1974, which clearly showed that Nixon was involved in the Watergate cover-up and interfered with the FBI investigation.

Here is a graph charting Nixon’s approval rating throughout this period and you can see how it goes down following major events.

Slide 12: Pro-Nixon and Anti-Impeachment 1 min 40 sec- slides 12-15

After Rep. Hogan made his July statement about voting for impeachment, he received around 11,000 letters within the first couple of weeks from people voicing either their support or disapproval of Hogan and the impeachment proceedings.

People expressed that the charges against President Nixon were based on rumors, a hoax, that there was a lack of evidence, and it was all because of Partisan politics rather than true Justice.

People also thought Rep. Hogan was doing this for publicity since he was running for Maryland Governor in 1974.

Slide 13: Pro-Nixon and Anti-Hogan

Hogan was called all sorts of names including Judas, rat, traitor, and so on. He received many types of letters with drawings, news clippings, and poems.

Slide 14: Anti-Hogan and Anti-Impeachment

People even sent in letters with rocks, quoting the Bible verse, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone.” Some even sent in pennies, stating that Hogan was only worth “one piece.”

(Letter with Nails: “You were a Pontius Pilate and stood before the people and judged him guilty, even without proof.”)

Slide 15: Pro-Impeachment

More people began to agree with Hogan that President Nixon needed to be impeached as the hearings continued to reveal more evidence.

The work of Hogan and the Judiciary Committee illustrated the challenges of upholding the rule of law in the face of dishonesty and public opinion, but essential for continuing a just and democratic society.

Slide 16: Resignation, Pardon, and Responses 55sec

Following the release of the “Smoking Gun” tape, which essentially destroyed any remaining support he had in Congress, Richard Nixon resigned his presidency on August 8, 1974.

(Smoking gun = conversations with Haldeman from July 23, 1972, several days after the Watergate break-in, where they discuss how to use the CIA to disrupt the FBI investigations of the break-in.)

Although the House of Representatives accepted the Judiciary’s report recommending impeachment, now-President Gerald Ford granted a full and unconditional pardon to Nixon for “any federal crimes he may have committed while in office.”

On a televised broadcast, President Ford said he didn’t want this scandal to drag on as the country needed to move forward and focus on other matters. Most importantly, for Ford, a pardon was an admission of guilt.

(Other concerns: Facing a recession and inflation (1973 oil crisis); Sagebrush Rebellion movement (repeal of environmental protections); school busing; Helsinki Accords; Vietnam war; Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus 1974; Yom Kippur War)

Ford’s pardon received immediate pushback from people who believed it was a poor decision that undermined justice and all the work of the past two years investigating the break-in.

Nevertheless, Nixon was pardoned and he never went to trial.

Slide 17: The Legacy: Political and Cultural Inheritances 1min 15sec

The Watergate scandal greatly changed American politics and culture and continues to influence our present views about the government, democracy, and justice.

Following Watergate and Nixon's resignation, legislative reforms were made aimed at restricting executive power and providing more transparency in the government. (Of course, not all of these reforms have lasted.)

The Watergate scandal is often compared with subsequent impeachment cases such as one against Bill Clinton and the two against Donald Trump, both of whom went to trial and were acquitted by the Senate.

(Inquiries for Ronald Reagan (1983) - Iran-Contra affair and Both George Bushes (1991; 2008) - Gulf War and Iraq War)

One of the important things the Watergate scandal did was bring to public attention the necessity for accountability and constitutional responsibility for the checks and balances of power at all levels of government.

It illustrated the need for the proper moral and ethical conduct of political leaders. In addition, it also showed the power of media reporting and investigative journalism which can sway public opinion and influence major decisions.

Watergate's legacy is one of questioning, accountability, and a desire to become better with truth and justice as our guiding principles.

Slide 18: Lawrence Joseph Hogan, Sr. papers 30sec for slide 18-19

Before I end, I want to briefly mention that most of the images I used in this presentation are documents from the Lawrence Joseph Hogan, Sr. papers, held here at the University's Archives.

This large collection provides insights into Rep. Hogan's time in Congress and as Prince George's County Executive during a turbulent time in American history.

Slide 19: Lawrence Joseph Hogan, Sr. papers - Resources

You can learn more about Rep. Hogan's career and the collection at the Archive's website and on our blog where I wrote several posts highlighting some of the interesting items.

Slide 20: Bibliography

Here is a list of some sources I used in my research for this presentation.

Slide 21: End

Thank you for your time.

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