

Who Will the Impeachment Trial Hurt More?

In a few days the impeachment trial will be over. We all know how it will end. We knew before the trial began.

What we don't know is how voters will react, not only to the verdict but also to the whole show.

And by voters I don't mean all voters. I mean that relatively small sliver of voters who we call independents or moderates or swing voters – especially those in battleground states. They make up somewhere between 8 and 12 percent of the electorate. That's the number Karl Rove has put on it.

Will they be more put off by Democrats who were out to get the president from the moment he was elected – or by the president whose phone call to the President of Ukraine was not “perfect” but careless and just plain dumb?

I'm fascinated – and not in a good way – by partisans who know things they can't really know. I hear from them all the time. Democrats *know* that Donald Trump will pay a price next November for what he did. They *know* he will lose not only because of what he said on that phone call, but also because Republicans wouldn't allow John Bolton (and a few others) to testify at the trial. They *know* he will be rejected at the polls because they claim (in places like CNN) that his lawyers lied during the Senate trial and at some point will be sanctioned. These are people who have no doubts. I'm not comfortable around people who have no doubts.

Republicans know things too. They *know* Democrats will pay a hefty price for railroading a president who they say did absolutely nothing wrong; that committed no crime. They *know* Democrats will suffer because their partisanship was both obnoxious and obvious. They *know* that voters will remember how

Democrats said Donald Trump was a Russian asset and with the help of their media allies tried to convince the nation of that for more than two years. They *know* that they detest Adam Schiff, Jerry Nadler, Nancy Pelosi and the rest of the party's Trump-haters more than they dislike the president. They *know* all this the way people know that the sun rises in the east.

A personal note: I'm absolutely sure of almost nothing when it comes to the world of politics. My crystal ball broke in 2016 when I was sure Donald Trump couldn't possibly win. That said, I'm pretty sure I know how partisan Democrats will vote in November; same with partisan Republicans. But I wouldn't bet two cents on those independent, moderate, swing voters – the ones who will decide the election.

Some people have certainty ingrained in their DNA. They're sure of a whole bunch of things they can't be sure of. They just know how things will turn out. That's why God invented Las Vegas.

Forgive me for repeating what I've written before: If the election is about the economy, about record low unemployment, about high consumer confidence, then my money is on Donald Trump. But if it's about Donald Trump himself, I think there's a good chance he'll lose.

And just between us, I'm not sure about any of that.