

# VIRGINIANS FOR PEACE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

GRASSROOTS  
CIVICS SERIES

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Public Examination of Impeachment and the Bush Administration Held in Northern Virginia

A grassroots group, Virginians for Peace and Accountability, hosted the first public examination of impeachment and the Bush administration to be held in northern Virginia, on June 23, 2007 at George Mason University. In their first effort, in what the organizers are calling their Grassroots Civics Series, they managed to bring together a distinguished panel of legal experts and scholars and an audience of 70 for the Saturday afternoon-long event.

The town hall type program was organized by the group of concerned citizens to stimulate public discussion about presidential accountability by addressing Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's assertion that Congress could take impeachment off the table.

There was consensus on the panel that impeachment plays a vital role in American government.

"Impeachment, as anything in the Constitution, is always on the table." This was how panelist Gil Davis, an attorney and member of Virginia's 11<sup>th</sup> Cong. Dist. Republican Committee, answered the question of the day. "There is always an inquiry that can be made about conduct." Mr. Davis is best known for having represented Paula Jones in her suit against President Clinton. This was the first private civil suit in U.S. history against a sitting president for personal wrongdoing, ultimately resulting in a unanimous Supreme Court decision holding that a president is not immune for personal misconduct (*Clinton v. Jones*, 1997).

Barbara Olshansky, a professor at Stanford Law School and one of the chief attorneys defending Guantanamo detainees, explained how her work has informed her opinion of whether impeachment should be on the table. "[M]y view of this issue in particular, I think, is informed very much about what I have seen myself over the last five and a half years. . . . I'm quite used to the idea of success without victory. And for me that means doing it, and doing it now when it's required because the entire world is watching," said Olshansky.

Marcus Raskin, co-founder and Distinguished Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies, and a professor at George Washington University, values impeachment as a way to hold government accountable. "The impeachment has the effect, an *in terrorem* [warning] effect, on this President and on future presidents as well," said Raskin.

Probably the most influential voice on the panel, because he is the former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell during President Bush's first term, was retired Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, whose son is currently serving in Iraq.

"I will answer the question as an academic," said Wilkerson, an adjunct professor at the College of William and Mary, "Nancy Pelosi was dead wrong. Impeachment, as long as Article II, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution exists, it's always on the table. It's never off the table."

The most newsworthy statement of the afternoon was probably the cautionary advice Col. Wilkerson gave the audience at the end of his opening remarks. "I'll close with this comment," he said. "If you are going to impeach one of the two, do Cheney first. I believe that if you didn't do Cheney first, you'd have marshal law and a national security state writ large, because that is what he would do as soon as you impeach the President."

The forum was recorded and can be viewed at [http://www.peaceandaccountability.com/panel6\\_23\\_07.html](http://www.peaceandaccountability.com/panel6_23_07.html).  
For more information visit [www.peaceandaccountability.com](http://www.peaceandaccountability.com) or call David Bell 703-402-0351.