

**Real World Graduation: Question 63: Impeachment**

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Question 63

State legislatures have a power to impeach (convict) a state Governor and to remove him from office. Suppose a Governor of a state has been implicated in a wide variety of corrupt activities, and federal investigators have videotapes, emails, and wiretapped phone calls in which the Governor is observed engaging in numerous criminal conspiracies to commit fraud and bribery. The evidence is provided to the state legislature by the investigating authorities. The Governor refuses to resign his office. How soon will the state legislature impeach the Governor and remove him from office?

- a) Within a few hours
- b) Within a few days
- c) Within a few weeks
- d) Within a few months
- e) As soon as possible, consistent with the procedures called out in the state constitution.

### Answer to Question 63

This is a trick question. It is highly unlikely that the legislature will impeach him (although it does happen on occasion). The reason he is not likely to be impeached by the legislature is that the corrupt Governor knows about a lot of the corruption being practiced by the members of the legislature. He will intimidate them into abandoning impeachment by threatening to rat all of them out for their illegal activities.

Members of the legislature are not disturbed by revelations of corruption by Governors. They are not usually bothered by the fact that the people continue to suffer under a government staffed by professional criminals. Their main concern is whether or not they appear on the tapes, phone calls, or emails; i.e., to what extent they can be implicated in the Governor's crimes, and whether the public suspects that they benefitted.

If a state legislator fails to impeach, and the state prosecutor fails to act, a Governor can be only be removed by indictment and conviction by the federal government. A rare exception may occur when the Governor is already unpopular enough that he will have a negative impact on the re-election chances for members of his party. In that case, the members of his party in the legislature may go along with impeachment in order to save their own reputations and re-election chances, not because they care about corruption in state politics. The opposing party will be happy to impeach the Governor, and they will drag the whole process out as long as possible for political gain.

It is difficult for the Governor's party to actually vote to impeach him, as the members of the opposing party will use the issue to point out corruption among members of the Governor's party. The Governor's party will spend a great amount of time and energy attempting to avoid this kind of negative press by putting forward a sufficient number of plausible excuses for the Governor's behavior. The hope is that they can buy enough time until some other scandal or bigger problem causes it all to fade into the background.