

Office of Rep. Liz Cheney, Liz Cheney Delivers Remarks At Loeb School First Amendment Event, Nov. 9, 2021

Thank you. Well, it is wonderful to be here with you today, and I only regret that I have to follow Tara and Jon because what a tremendous story, and what a tremendous story for citizens and for the students here that at the end of the day, it's individuals who make the difference, and it's individuals who have to make the difference. So, I couldn't be more humbled and honored to be here. So, thank you all and congratulations on a wonderful and well-deserved award.

It's wonderful to be here at the Loeb School. I want to also thank Joe very much, and thank the Union Leader. You know, I think that we all have seen, particularly in recent years, that it is increasingly rare that journalists — journalism is an entity that focuses on the truth, focuses on the facts. We can always count on that here, and count on that from the Union Leader. And so it's wonderful to be here, wonderful to be able to honor the integrity and the truth telling of the Union Leader, as well as of Tara and Jon. So, I'm thrilled to do that.

I'm especially pleased to be here and have the chance to talk about our Constitution and talk about the First Amendment. When I think about the First Amendment, the first thing that I think about is the history of this great nation. And I actually had the chance this morning to do something I have never done before, and that was to visit the Eliot Burying Ground in Roxbury. And if you haven't been, it's a wonderful place. It happens to be, I think, maybe the second oldest cemetery in Boston, but there are fifteen Cheney's buried in the Eliot Burying Ground. And it is a wonderful — It was very moving. I FaceTimed my parents. It took more time for them to figure out how to FaceTime than it did to get there, but do not tell them I told you that. But some of the very first Cheney's who came to America are actually buried at Eliot Burying Ground. William Cheney is there. He came in 1640, and he was part of the great immigration of Puritans who were trying to escape religious persecution in England, and who came to the United States thinking and hoping that we would become "a city on a hill."

Some of my Cheney ancestors then moved to New Hampshire shortly after the Revolutionary War, and my great-great-grandfather, Samuel Fletcher Cheney, was born in Merrimack County, not far from here, in 1829. Samuel Fletcher Cheney moved to Defiance, Ohio, and enlisted in April of 1861 when President Lincoln first called for troops when the Civil War began. He fought in the Union Army for four years. He was on Sherman's March to the Sea, and he was in the Grand Revue parade in Washington, D.C. — marched past the reviewing stand with President Andrew Johnson and General Grant. And he knew, like all of the others who fought to preserve our Union — He exemplified the idea that's enshrined in the motto of New Hampshire: Live Free or Die. They knew the price of freedom. They knew that it had to be fought for and defended. And they knew that they were the ones who had to do it.

One of the greatest blessings of this country is that in every generation we have had citizens who've been willing to serve, citizens who've been willing to answer that call and to defend our freedom. And as we meet here today, I can tell you without a doubt

that the task for which so many generations have fought and have sacrificed now falls to us.

Shortly after the impeachment back in January, I got a message from a Gold Star Father and he said to me, "Standing up for truth honors all who gave all." And I think that is something I will certainly never forget and something that I think we all have to remember every day. This task now falls to us and the question for every one of us, not just for those of us who are elected, but for every one of us, is this: In this time of testing, will we do our duty? Will we do what we must? Will we defend our Constitution? Will we stand for truth? Will we put duty to our oath above partisan politics? Or will we look away from the danger, ignore the threat, embrace the lies and enable the liar? There is no gray area when it comes to that question. When it comes to this moment, there is no middle ground.

Our Founders provided that every elected official would swear an oath. And it's not an oath to a party. It's not an oath to an individual. It's a solemn oath that we swear before God to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. The Founders established this oath because they knew the danger of faction. They knew that the survival of this great American experiment, the survival of our Republic, depended upon public servants of goodwill doing their duty to the Constitution, putting loyalty to the nation and its founding ideals above self-interest. This is no small thing. In fact, it is everything.

Today, too many political leaders seem to have forgotten the sacred nature of that oath, at precisely this moment when it matters most. We are confronting threats globally that are in many ways unparalleled. We've watched in the last week as the Chinese have tested a hypersonic weapon. We've seen reports come out in just the last few days that they may have a thousand nuclear weapons by 2030. We are seeing a North Korea on the march, Iran on the march, Russia on the march — nations around the world testing America. At precisely this moment we need to make sure that we are unified. We need to ensure that as a nation we are working together to fight to preserve our freedom, to fight to preserve those ideals.

And at this moment, when it matters most, we are also confronting a domestic threat that we've never faced before: a former president who's attempting to unravel the foundations of our Constitutional Republic, aided by political leaders who have made themselves willing hostages to this dangerous and irrational man.

Just last night, former President Trump was invited by House Republican leaders to be the keynote speaker at our annual large fundraising dinner. At the dinner, he reportedly said, once again, that the "insurrection was on November 3rd," and that the events of January 6th — when a violent mob invaded the Capitol in an effort to overturn the will of the American people and stop the constitutional process of the counting of electoral votes — that those events were a "protest," that they were justified.

Political leaders who sit silent in the face of these false and dangerous claims are aiding a former president who is at war with the rule of law and the Constitution.

When our constitutional order is threatened, as it is now, rising above partisanship is not simply an aspiration. It is an obligation — an obligation of every one of us.

You know, I am a conservative Republican. I disagree strongly with nearly everything President Biden has done since he has been in office. His policies are bad for this country. I believe deeply that conservative principles: limited government, low taxes, a strong national defense, the family — the family as the essential building block of our nation and our society, those are the right ideals for this country.

I love my party. I love its history. I love its principles, but I love my country more. I know this nation needs a Republican Party that is based on truth, one that puts forward our ideals and our policies based on substance. One that is willing to reject the former president's lies. One that is willing to tell the truth: that millions of Americans have been tragically misled by former President Trump, who continues to this day to use language that he knows provoked violence on January 6th.

We need a Republican Party that is led by people who remember that the peaceful transfer of power is sacred and it undergirds the very foundations of our Republic. We need Republican leaders who remember that fidelity to the Constitution, fidelity to the rule of law, those are the most conservative of conservative principles.

In the months since January 6th, I have sometimes heard people say something like, "Well, what happened was bad, but it wasn't that big a deal because our institutions held." To those people, I say, our institutions do not defend themselves. We the people defend them.

Our institutions held on January 6th because there were brave men and women, elected officials at every level of our government who did their duty, who stood up for what was right, who resisted pressure to do otherwise. And our institutions held because of the bravery of the men and women in law enforcement and in our military, our Capitol Police, some of whom are here with us today, our metropolitan police, the ATF — men and women in law enforcement who defended the most sacred space in our Republic, our Capitol building.

Our institutions held because there were 140 law enforcement officers who fought for hours and held the tunnel on the West front of the Capitol, preventing a violent mob of even more, thousands more, from entering our building. Because of these brave men and women, Congress was safe and we carried out our constitutional duty to count the electoral votes.

That is why our institutions held. Because men and women of courage and honor recognized one of the most fundamental principles in a Republic — and that is the principle that no citizen in a Republic is a bystander. No one is. Every one of us is called to defend this great experiment of government of, by and for the people.

In all the history of mankind there has never been a place like America. Our nation is far from perfect, but we know that it is our founding documents, our founding principles, the Constitution, our Bill of Rights, that provide the path forward for freedom and for justice for every one of us — and not just for us, but for all mankind.

We've been entrusted with this nation by God and by every generation that has cherished and protected her since our founding. And we have a duty not just to protect and defend the nation, but we have a duty to protect our ideals and our freedoms by safeguarding our history.

As we've watched over the last several years, it has become even more clear than ever that American history is lacking in our schools. We have to teach our children what is special about this nation.

Our children need to know about the boys of Pointe du Hoc. They need to know about Doolittle's Raiders, the battles of Midway and Iwo Jima. They need to know about the courage of the young Americans who fought the Nazis at the Battle of the Bulge and the Japanese on Okinawa. They need to learn why America was right to end the war by dropping atomic bombs. And they need to know about the fundamental decency of a nation that established the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

They need to know about the horror of the Holocaust and what it means to promise 'never again.' They need to know that once there was an empire that was so evil and so bereft of truth, it had to build a wall to keep its citizens in, and that the free world, led by America, defeated it. And we did that, by the way, on this day in 1989 when the Wall came down. They need to know about the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11, the courage of the first responders, and the heroism of the passengers on Flight 93. They need to learn about great men — great men like George C. Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan, and great women like Margaret Thatcher. They need to know what it took to prevail over evil in the 20th Century and what it will take in the 21st. And we must make sure that our children know that it's the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who defend our freedom and secure it for millions of others as well. Our children need to know that they are citizens of the most powerful, good, and honorable nation in the history of mankind — the exceptional nation. Ordinary Americans have done heroic things to guarantee her survival.

America's future and the future of freedom for all the world now depends on us. If we do our duty, if we stand for truth, if we put love of country above partisanship, if we honor our oaths, if we conduct ourselves as public servants in a way that is worthy of the sacrifice of the men and women who wear the uniform of this nation, then we will be able to hand this exceptional country with our freedoms secured to our children. And we will be able to say to them, "In our time of testing, we did not falter and we did not fail." And our children and their children will know we loved our country more.

Thank you to every one of you for your love of this nation, your love of our Constitution and our Bill of Rights. And thank you very much for your steadfast fidelity to those things.