

September 15, 2009

Protecting the Integrity of the Institution: Resolution of Disapproval for Rep. Joe Wilson

- Today, the House will consider a resolution disapproving of the conduct by Rep. Joe Wilson during the joint session of Congress.
- Congressman Joe Wilson's outburst was a breach of decorum and brought discredit to the House of Representatives.
- It is common for Members to address such breaches of conduct themselves rather than force action by the full House. In fact, the Republican Leadership asked Rep. Joe Wilson to apologize to the House and he has refused. [Roll Call, [9/15/09](#)]
- The House general code of conduct requires that "a lawmaker shall conduct himself at all times in a manner which shall reflect creditably on the House of Representatives." These are the standards members are held to when they take the oath of office.
- Silence would condone bad behavior and set a precedent for that kind of misconduct for the future.
- In the absence of an apology, the House must act to admonish his behavior.
- We must act to protect the integrity and dignity of the legislative institution and its proceedings. The rules of decorum are not Republican or Democratic, they are the rules of civility and of decency that have sustained basic comity in this institution for over 200 years.
- There are levels of rebuke (in order of severity) and this resolution specifies the fourth: expulsion, censure, reprimand, disapproval.
- "This probably is not a question of decorum in debate as much as a question of decorum generally," House Parliamentarian John Sullivan said. [AP, [9/14/09](#)]

House Democratic Leadership