

SHERIFF JOHN GRISMORE
OPENING REMARKS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON IMPEACHMENT INQUIRY
December 11, 2023

I am John Grismore. I am the lawfully elected Sheriff for Franklin County, Vermont. I am the person that the citizens of Franklin County chose to be their Sheriff and the person that those citizens want to continue as Sheriff. The responsibilities that have been bestowed upon me by the citizens of Franklin County are sacred and humbling and I will not abandon those who have asked me to serve to ease my personal burden or to appease outsiders. I am grateful and blessed from the continual outpouring of support I receive from the citizens of Franklin County and they inspire me to persevere in the face of adversity.

I am not here today in response to your subpoena. I am here because this is the first opportunity that I have been given to stand up for myself, for the good men and women of law enforcement in Vermont and for the citizens of Vermont who want to be safe in their homes, safe on the streets and safe from victimization by crime. I am here to speak truth to you because I am unbowed and unafraid to say what needs to be said.

I am an elected Sheriff but I am also every beat cop in this State. Make no mistake. Every police officer in this State who puts on a badge and a gun to serve the public knows that I am him or her. The outrage and scorn that have been directed at me, the persecution and witch hunts that I have suffered could happen to any police officer required to confront and arrest a non-compliant person. Police work is messy, often fast and occasionally violent. Police officers are not bullies or sadists who take pleasure in hurting people. Police officers are well intentioned, dedicated people who accept the duty to use the power of the State to keep themselves, their co-workers and the public safe from harm. Policing is a hard job, there is no perfect way to do it but it must be done, and done without hesitation. Every day, police officers have to do things that will look aggressive on video to those who are not experienced in the realities of police work. Police officers need the support of their agencies and the institutions of government to remain a viable defense against chaos.

When police agencies and the institutions of government turn their backs on police officers, or throw police officers under the bus when it is politically expedient, police officers flee their positions in droves or refuse to do what their jobs require of them. Social order quickly breaks down without adequate and effective policing. The evidence of this is all around us. Vermont is literally on fire. There is no corner or rural hamlet of our State so remote that it has not been touched by inner-city violence, rampant drug addiction, skyrocketing property crimes and homelessness. My home city of St. Albans is experiencing types of crimes and violence like never before. Burlington is unrecognizable from the vibrant city it was only a few years ago and is in danger of becoming a hollowed out shell of desperation like many of America's dying small cities. Vermont's tourist driven economy is under direct threat from Vermont's fading image as a safe, picturesque vacation destination. The speed at which this transformation has come about is stunning and the pace of deterioration continues to escalate. We are at a tipping point and an

immediate pivot to the support of law enforcement is essential.

The drastic and sudden deterioration in our society has one, single primary cause. We have allowed the media outrage machine to drive our policies and decision making. Political leaders and decision makers have wilted under pressure of the mob which has been whipped into a frenzy by media lie after lie. Among the most socially corrosive lies from the media has been the lie that all police officers are bullies and racists. The media driven anti-police movement, that gained steam after 2014 and reached tsunami proportions in the last few years, has carved out the ranks of police departments and crushed the spirit of many police officers who remain. Police officers simply cannot be effective if they are forced to always look over their shoulder wondering if they will be the next victim to be fed to the mob.

I am simply the latest victim of the media outrage machine, coupled with the ambitions of opportunistic politicians and weak willed leaders, to face the whipping block. The media has seized on 15 seconds of video, played on endless loop, to excoriate me in the pursuit of clicks and eyeballs. Instead of supporting me in what they know is right, the law enforcement leadership class has thrown me into the volcano hoping that the horde will be satiated by my sacrifice. Certain politicians have cynically seized on the controversy of my actions to attempt to gain notoriety for themselves. This is a disgrace to all those who are a party to it. It is also corrosive and utterly tone deaf to the message it sends to those men and women who still wear the uniform of police officers.

The whirlwind of hardship that has fallen upon me for using reasonable, necessary and appropriate force to quickly achieve compliance from a dangerous, violent, out of control person reverberates through rank and file police officers in this State. I know this because countless police officers, have reached out to me to offer support or to share their fears about becoming victim of the mob mentality that has engulfed me. What you are doing to me, what has already been done to me, is enormously damaging to the future of law enforcement in this State. There has never been a time in the history of Vermont that our quality of life, security and prosperity depend more on the willingness and morale of law enforcement. In the face of this, certain members of this body appear determined to continue to surge along the path that has brought us to this point.

Against this backdrop, I am here within the most irregular of prosecutions, impeachment by a co-equal branch of government. Impeachment has been considered so extreme in Vermont's history that it has only been attempted twice before. The current political class in this building seems to have such disdain for history or tradition as to think nothing of tossing away 232 years of legacy in order to pursue spuriously weak claims against me in an unprecedented process. This change in political temperature is perfectly in-step with the political and legal attacks the national Democratic Party has brought to bear against their Republican rivals. Seemingly, I am the new face of the successful Republican candidate who refuses to step aside for a Democrat. The media relentlessly beats the fear-drum of "anti-democratic," "autocratic" and "dictatorship." There is nothing more anti-democratic and autocratic than the effort in this room to override the

votes of 8,900 Franklin County residents and replace those votes with the backroom fancy of a hand-full of political insiders in Montpelier. This spits in the face of representative government.

Perhaps even more shocking than the discarding of hundreds of years of tradition and the disregard for the results of free and fair elections, is this Committee's ever-widening scope of its investigations into me. This Committee has arisen from the hubris of certain legislators who were unhappy that the voters of Franklin County chose me as Sheriff despite the media campaign leveled against me. These legislators, who seemingly feel their judgment is superior to the will of the Franklin County electorate, seek any reason to justify my ouster. Every aspect of my life, personal and professional, is being scrutinized in the desperate hope that valid cause for this unprecedented, and frankly un-American, undertaking will be uncovered. The people of Vermont know that this is not how we do things.

I am ready to answer your questions because I am unbowed, unafraid and I have nothing about which to have fear or shame.