



February 23, 2021

Rep. Will Mortenson (R-District 24) Statement on Filing Articles of Impeachment:

“Earlier today, I filed a Resolution including Articles of Impeachment calling for the removal of Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg from office. The decision was unpleasant and the situation is truly tragic, for all involved.

The filing followed months of consideration and advice. Ultimately, I felt that while the charging decision may have been correct, the Attorney General owes a higher duty to the Laws of the State of South Dakota and the People of the State of South Dakota. In his actions on the night of September 12, 2020 and following the incident, Attorney General Ravnsborg breached that duty and has lost the confidence of the people of South Dakota. When that happens, I believe the legislature has an obligation to exercise its constitutional authority to remove him from office.

There are several aspects that I’d like you to know about the decision.

First, I have no axe to grind with Attorney General Ravnsborg. I have always had a good relationship with him. This is not political and it is not personal. Again, I do not believe Attorney General Ravnsborg belongs in prison, but I know he does not belong in the Office of the Attorney General anymore.

Second, removal from office is an exceptional mechanism and should only be used in exceptional cases. In Washington, DC, they use impeachment to further political agendas and carry out partisan missions. In South Dakota, we should only use this in grave circumstances. In this case, a state official caused the death of a citizen and failed to comport himself in the standards we expect following the incident. Our state has never had such an occurrence, where the elected official refused to resign. In short, this is clearly an exceptional case.

Finally, the Attorney General is a member of the same party as me and I know him. Those facts cannot dissuade me from making this decision. We need to put principle and our people ahead of politics or our party. In South Dakota, the fact that we are in the same party means that my colleagues and I have had a lot of opportunities to spend time with Attorney General Ravnsborg. That makes this a very uncomfortable exercise, and I would ask that all members are afforded grace in their decision-making.”