

# Transmissions from Hawaii Episode 04 Transcript

## Insurrection Part 1: Congressman Ed Case Discusses the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the U.S. Capitol

### SPEAKERS

Tony Vega, Ed Case

**Tony Vega** 00:01

Transmissions from Hawaii

**Tony Vega** 00:14

Producer Tony Vega here, and welcome to Transmissions from Hawaii. Normally, I like to start things off with a short interview that gives you a general idea of what we're going to be talking about for the rest of the episode. But today we're doing things a little bit differently and that's because this is the first part in a 3-part miniseries we're calling "Insurrection."

**Tony Vega** 00:59

Those are the sounds of the attack on the US Capitol that took place on January 6, 2021. On that day, a mob forced their way into the US Capitol building in Washington, DC, in an attempt to overturn the defeat of President Donald Trump in the 2020 US presidential election. Like so many people around the world, I was deeply disturbed by the violence and hate that I saw on that day. But as someone whose job it is to find and tell stories about Hawaii, eventually the shock wore off and I began to wonder about how exactly this event relates back to Hawaii. Of course, there's many ways that you can answer that question, but what I latched onto was the usage of the word insurrection. Within the context of Hawaii's history, the word insurrection instantly brings to mind what happened in 1893. That's when a group of insurrectionists overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom. And we will be talking about the history and consequences of that event in parts 2 and 3 of this miniseries. But on this first installment, we'll be going back to January 6, to learn about the experience of someone who was in Washington, DC, on that

day. Shortly after the attack on the Capitol building, I reached out to congressman Ed Case, who represents Hawaii's 1st Congressional District. This is our conversation in its entirety.

**Tony Vega** 02:24

Can you take me back to the morning of January 6th? What were you thinking that morning? Were you at all concerned that there was going to be violence or anything approaching what ended up happening?

**Ed Case** 02:36

Well, I wasn't prepared for what happened, no, mentally, I was not prepared for that. It was going to be a very, very intense day - after all, this was the day that we were responsible under, under the constitution for certifying the election results. We already knew that there would be objections on the floor of the House from, from members of the Republican Party that would, in all likelihood, prompt debate, and that that debate would be a very difficult debate. And of course, we had had months and months of the, of the President, and others around the President, basically telling the American people that the election results were fraught with fraud and were invalid and, and a whole range of other issues. And so it was going to be an intense day to start with. We knew that there were, obviously we knew that there were protesters outside of the Capitol. I had walked by them the previous evening, I had talked with them, but to try to understand what was motivating them. And so it was, it was, it was a very tense day. But to think that it would spill from a very tense debate in the House and the Senate over to protest outside into outright violence and death in the United States Capitol and a desecration of, not only the building, but democracy and an embarrassment to the rest of the world - no, I didn't think that that was going to happen the morning of January 6.

**Tony Vega** 04:05

So at what point did you realize that this was much more than just a tense protest? How did you find out about this, where were you?

**Ed Case** 04:15

I was in my, I was in my office, which is in one of the house office buildings which are not in the Capitol proper, but they're, you know, very, very close to the Capitol, they're just across the street, a four or five minute walk, in my case. And most members of Congress were instructed to stay in their ar-, or were instructed not to come to the fore for COVID-19 purposes. In the normal course, in a non-COVID-19 world, it would have been incumbent on me to be there to listen to the debate and to make my own judgments on one of the, one of the really critical decisions that, that I would have to make, which was

whether I felt that the election results were valid or not. And so I would have been there in the normal course, but the instructions were: don't come unless you're part of that debate, or a limited number of people who, who were watching from the House galleries. And so, you know, they're 80, 90% of us were not on the floor of the House, I was in my office, I was watching on my live feed TV from my office and listening to the debate and trying to form my own judgments. But there was a point in which when I was watching the House proceedings that I could tell something was amiss, just from, just from what I could see on the floor, you know, there was, there was obvious disruption; I thought, at first it was a possibly a protester in the gallery until I realized that there were there was, there was nobody in the Gallery other than other than members of Congress and staff. And so, then I started to hear on the live feed audio that, that there was a loud noises, and then the, and then the, the audio feed went silent. And I turned, I turned to other channels and saw that the Capitol was being was being stormed, and, and at that moment, we all have emergency notice-, notification systems on our personal devices, and, you know, mine went off and the instructions were we have, we have a very dangerous situation in the Capitol and, and shelter in place, lock your doors, don't let anybody know you're in your office. And so that's exactly what I did for the next 5+ hours.

**Tony Vega 06:28**

Wow. So did you get in touch with anyone? Did you contact anyone? What were you doing during those five hours?

**Ed Case 06:38**

Well, I mean, it was obvious to the outside world what was going on and so, my, you know, people started to email me to find out if I was okay, because the news was very sketchy, there was obvious violence going on in the Capitol, there were 1000s and 1000s of people in there that were, you know, ransacking it. It could be witnessed from the outside that this was not a peaceful entry into the Capitol. Obviously, people were, you know, bashing in, you know, windows and, and it was, it was clear that there was no security going into the Capitol, so anybody could have brought anything in from guns to any other kinds of weapons. And so people back at home, home started to contact me to see if I was okay. Also, the media back home and elsewhere wanted to know what was going on, and of course, my family, I needed to let them know that I was okay. And so that's what I did for four.. immediately, I couldn't do anything from a contributing to restoring order in the Capitol perspective, other than to stay out of everybody's way. And so, you know, I was in touch with colleagues, to, to compare notes, to, to understand what was going on and how we can help each other, I was certainly in contact with our Hawaii congressional delegation, to make sure they were okay. And my, my, my colleague, Congressman Kahele, had just been sworn in three days before that, and he was not he was out in the Capitol, and I wanted to, you know, make sure that everything was, was okay there, and he wanted to check in with me. So that was, so I just tried to watch as much as I could what was going on, but also

comply with the instructions of Capitol security, and, and with the time that I have to try to try to sort out what I thought about all of it, and what I wanted to say to the folks back home and, and to the media, so that that occupied those five hours.

**Tony Vega** 08:46

Right. Could you tell me what it was like going to the Capitol for the first time after things were safe enough to do that?

**Ed Case** 08:55

Well, by the time that, well, first of all, the first time I went to the Capitol was that evening, because we had further votes that we had votes to, to certify the election results and so the votes more accurately were against Republican motions to object to a certification of the results. And so it was, it was very, very eerie, to go to the Capitol. And of course, it was highly, highly, highly secure environment, there were there were for example, when I walked when I walked from my office, to the US Capitol, there are two ways of being walking there: one is across the street above ground, and the other is through through tunnels that connect the two buildings. And nobody was going across the street above ground, we were instructed not to do that. I like to do that usually, because it gets me outside, but I went through the tunnel. There were, you know, National Guard troops, there was heavy arms. And similarly when you got to the Capitol itself and went onto the floor of the house, there were just security folks all around, you could see staring you in the face, you know, shattered glass and, and areas that had been desecrated. But, so it was a very surreal environment to go over there and, and vote on some very, very important votes. And, and that that, and I think, you know, the, the, the only bright spot, if I can put it that way of the evening was that although the clear intent of the demonstrators and, and the folks that incited them up to it, including the President, was to disrupt and even prevent the certification of the results, Congress decided immediately that we were going to finish our job that night - we weren't going to suspend the certification of the results, we were going to continue with the debate, and we were going to take the vote. And I credit everybody for that on both sides, because the leaders of the, of the house in the Senate, on both the Democrat and the Republican side, gave instructions and indications right from the get- go that as soon as, as soon as we were comfortable with the security of the folks in the Capitol, meaning that Capitol then searched and there was nothing hidden in there that would present a risk to anybody, that we were going to finish our job, and that's what we did. So the last vote was quite early in the morning, I think. I think my evening ended somewhere around three 3:30 in the morning, I think, was the last vote. And I went home, and pretty hard to go to sleep after a night like that, so I'm not sure I did, actually.

**Tony Vega** 11:38

What, what would you say the, the significance of that day was? What do you think, how will it be remembered?

**Ed Case 11:49**

Well, I think it's going to be remembered as, as, as, as a day on which the, the, the, the polarization and division within our country was on full display for our country and the world to see where there was, where there was, there was no escaping anymore. This serious nature of what happens when we, when we, when we engage in incendiary language and incendiary incitement where words do matter, where people can be, you know, led to a place where they would actually assault the, the, the, the, the foundation of the democracy that gives them the right to express themselves and to protest. I hope that's what it's remembered for. It is a, it's a very, very dark day in our country's history. And yet, I hope it's remembered not just for that, but for the, for the, for the time that we turn the corner on all of this, and I think the jury's out on that, but that's up to all of us to figure out.

**Tony Vega 13:08**

Yeah. Well, well, thank you so much for sharing your experiences on that day, Congressman. I mean, just one last question: are you at all concerned for your safety or the safety of your colleagues at this point? Or what, what is your mindset right now?

**Ed Case 13:26**

I think for any one of us, we have to step back. And we would like the answer to be no. But the fact of the matter is that, that we have to be more conscious of our own personal safety. There,.. the line that we thought existed between protest, even very, very rigorous protest, and violence, that line was crossed. And there's no reason why that line cannot be crossed with respect to individual members of Congress. And so I, I don't want to use the word fear, but I'm very vigilant to that possibility where perhaps I wasn't, and that's too bad that, you know, we have to, you know, start to feel that way. Because for me, what this has always been about is, is representing the folks that I that I have been asked to represent and that involves freely moving around, and you know, taking a certain level of safety risk, but, but a tolerable one. And I'm having to be more careful now. And that's before you get to the, the, the point that some of my own colleagues in the US House do not respect that and are willing to insist on a right that is not, does not exist to carry a firearm onto the floor of the of the US House to, to carry concealed weapons on the, on the grounds of the US Capitol even though the, the, the laws of Washington, DC, prevent that. And that presents a safety risk. It presents to me a lot of different issues, but one of them is a safety risk. So, you know, one doesn't was, one can't completely rely anymore on

the fact that you are even safe among your own colleagues and I think that's a very sad commentary on, on, on, on this time in our history.

**Tony Vega** 15:28

Well, than- thank you so much again. Appreciate you making time. Yeah, thank you.

**Ed Case** 15:34

Okay, thank you very much. Appreciate your having me on, and good luck.

**Tony Vega** 15:38

Great. Thank you!

**Ed Case** 15:39

Aloha!

**Tony Vega** 15:44

If you would like to watch a video of this interview, then please check the link in the show notes or visit the Transmissions from Hawaii YouTube channel. Transmissions from Hawaii is a production of Wasabi magazine. It's produced in the beautiful city of Honolulu by me, Tony Vega. We'll be back very soon with part 2 of Insurrection, and in that installment, we'll be learning about the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. If you would like to make sure that you don't miss Part 2 or any future episodes of Transmissions from Hawaii, then please remember to subscribe to the show, tell a friend about the show, leave a rating and a review in your podcast app - we need your help to grow the audience and turn this into something sustainable. So please help us spread the word. Mahalo for listening, and see you next time on Transmissions from Hawaii.