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In Washington, D.C., James Comey's testimony before a Senate committee Thursday prompted early openings, parties and specials at bars and restaurants around the city. In Philadelphia, the fired FBI director's remarks to Congress weren't met with such intense interest.

"Two ladies requested it, but they're not even watching now," said Misconduct Tavern hostess Marcia Hunter, glancing at two women who were engrossed in conversation.

Tennis and Sports Center turned out to be more popular in many places than Comey's appearance.

"Most people are more interested in watching sports," conceded the woman tending at the mostly empty Fratelli's Italian Bistro. "People are sick and tired of watching politics."

At McGillin's Olde Ale House, three televisions played the Comey hearing to a sparse crowd as his testimony opened. The Center City bar typically draws a diverse audience for major TV events, attracting construction workers and politicians, said owner and manager Christopher Mullins.

But at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, not a single chair or barstool was filled.

"I don't think people are taking it lightly. It's a serious event," Mullins said. "People come to bars to celebrate. Nobody's taking the day off to watch this soap opera — unless you're in Washington."

Still, there were signs around the city of at least passing interest. AT&T security guard Malachi Hinton, 33, said he had been observing people who stopped by to watch the hearing on the business' 85-inch screen.

At Milkboy, a dozen patrons gazed sporadically at the two televisions playing the hearing. But Joe and Sarah Maiellano were the only ones intently watching the screen. The couple had the day off after just returning from vacation, and came to bar and restaurant at 11th and Chestnut Streets because their TV and internet weren't working.

They asked the bar to change the channel from Sports Center.

The Philadelphia natives, who returned to the city two years ago after having lived in D.C. for 10 years, expressed sympathy for Comey. They said they see him as a dedicated public servant. Sarah Maiellano called him "a victim of this administration."

Her husband, a fundraiser, said he worked on the campaigns for 24 Republican congressmen, but voted for Gary Johnson in the 2016 election.

"[Trump] doesn't represent the Republican party I worked for," Joe Maiellano said.

The couple said they had modest expectations for the hearing's outcome.

"I'm hoping for whatever's gonna be best for the country," Joe Maiellano said. "Every scandal that's come I've tried to say 'maybe we shouldn't rush to judgment, give the man the benefit of the doubt, there's gotta be something more to it.' But I feel like I've been proven wrong time and time again."

He wasn't the only Philadelphian feeling frustrated.

At Molly Malloy's in Reading Terminal Market, bartender Hanna Ryan had had enough of senators' questions and the former FBI director's answers. She rolled her eyes at the screen and said, "I think they're all creeps. Every single one of them." – *Philadelphia Inquirer*



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