

GOP: Still ‘work to do’ to get Kavanaugh confirmed

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Senate Judiciary Committee voted today along party lines to forward the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh, even as a top Republican acknowledged the GOP was still short the votes needed in the full Senate to confirm him for the high court following accusations of sexual assault.

“We still probably got a little work to do,” said Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, the third-ranking Republican.

The 11-10 vote came just one day after Republicans heard testimony from Christine Blasey Ford, who accused Kavanaugh of sexually assaulting her when they were teens. Kavanaugh denied the accusation.

At the last minute, Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona, said he could not promise to vote for Kavanaugh on the Senate floor and called for a delay of up to a week for a further investigation.

Republicans voted to move ahead with Kavanaugh’s nomination.

Several moderate Democratic senators facing tough re-election contests this fall in states President Donald Trump won announced their opposition: Jon Tester of Montana, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Bill Nelson of Florida.

“The allegations made against Judge Kavanaugh are disturbing and credible,” Donnelly said in a statement. “In the interest of getting as much information as possible, I believe the allegations should be investigated by the FBI.”

Attention turned to a handful of undecided moderates in both parties, most notably Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, two Republicans who have been willing to buck party



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik

Brett Kavanaugh testifies before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

leaders before. Neither has said whether she would vote to confirm Kavanaugh.

The maneuvering followed an emotional day of testimony from both Kavanaugh and Ford that exposed divisions over justice, fairness and who should be believed. Coming weeks before the midterm elections, it ensured the debate would play into the fight for control of Congress.

As lawmakers wrangled over process, protesters swarmed Capitol Hill. Two women cornered Flake in an elevator and, through tears, implored him to change his mind.

Democrats are also pushing to subpoena Mark Judge, a high school friend of Kavanaugh who Ford testified was a witness to the alleged assault.

Judge has said he does not recall the incident, and a Democratic motion to subpoena him was blocked by Republicans in a vote. Several Democrats, including Kamala Harris of California and Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, walked out of the hearing room.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont said it was as if Judge had “effectively nailed a do not disturb sign, and apparently the Republicans on this committee are satisfied.”

Leahy said it’s not that

Democrats are trying to delay the nomination ahead of the congressional elections as Republicans contend. “This is about doing our job,” he said.

Meanwhile, there were signs that Thursday’s remarkable testimony before the panel — in which Kavanaugh angrily declared his innocence and Ford recounted the moment in which she says he attacked her — had registered negatively with two organizations whose support Kavanaugh had earlier received.

The American Bar Association, which previously gave Kavanaugh its highest rating of “well qualified,” asked the Senate committee and the full Senate to delay their votes until the FBI could do a full background check on the assault claims — something President Donald Trump has refused to order. Grassley, too, has refused.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders dismissed that Friday, telling reporters that Kavanaugh has already “been through six separate background investigations by the FBI.”

Late Thursday, the magazine of the Jesuit religious order in the United States withdrew its endorsement of Kavanaugh, saying the nomination was no longer in the interests of the country and “should be withdrawn.”

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

House passes GOP bill to make new tax cuts permanent

WASHINGTON — Republicans have sped legislation through the House to expand their massive new tax law, capping their session for the year as they rush out of town to face voters in the November elections. The new bill would make permanent the individual and small-business tax cuts in the law.

Today’s vote was 220-191 in the Republican-led House to approve the legislation. It’s the second tax-cut proposal that Republican leaders have pushed in less than a year. The vote was mostly along party lines. Democrats continued their solid opposition to tax-cut legislation, asserting it favors corporations and wealthy individuals over middle-income Americans.

At the same time, several Republican House members, facing tough re-election fights in the high-tax, Democratic-leaning states of New York and New Jersey, voted against their party’s bill.

Prospects for the legislation in the Senate are weak, given the slim Republican majority and concern over the potential for further blowing up the deficit with new tax cuts — without corresponding new revenue sources. The sweeping rewrite of the tax code that Republicans hustled through Congress late last year, signed into law by Trump as his signature legislative achievement, is expected to add about \$1.5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years.

Tsunami sweeps away homes on Indonesian island of Sulawesi

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A powerful earthquake rocked the Indonesian island of Sulawesi today, triggering a 10-foot-tall tsunami that an official said swept away houses in at least two cities.

The tsunami hit Palu, the capital of central Sulawesi province, a smaller city, Donggala, and several other coastal settlements.

Houses were swept away and families were

reported missing. Communications and power to the area were disrupted.

Indonesian TV showed a smartphone video of a powerful wave hitting Palu, with people screaming and running in fear. The water smashed into buildings and a large mosque already damaged by the quake.

The Indonesian military will deploy troops to Palu and Donggala and the national police will also mobilize to help the emergency response, in addition to personnel from the search-and-rescue and disaster agencies.

Indonesia is prone to earthquakes because of its location on the “Ring of Fire,” an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

In December 2004, a massive magnitude 9.1 earthquake off Sumatra in western Indonesia triggered a tsunami that killed 230,000 people in a dozen countries.

Facebook says 50M user accounts affected by security breach

NEW YORK — Facebook says it recently discovered a security breach affecting nearly 50 million user accounts.

In a blog post, the company says hackers exploited its “View As” feature, which lets people see what their profiles look like to someone else. Facebook says it has taken steps to fix the security problem and alerted law enforcement.

To deal with the issue, Facebook reset some logins, so 90 million people have been logged out and will have to log in again. That includes anyone who has been subject to a “View As” lookup in the past year.

Facebook says it doesn’t know who’s behind the attacks or where they’re based.

The hack is the latest security headache for Facebook, which has been dealing with political disinformation campaigns from Russia and elsewhere since 2016.

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