House judiciary approves impeachment

Trump faces abuse of power, obstruction of Congress charges

By LISA MASCARO and MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democrats propelled President Donald Trump's impeachment toward a historic vote by the full U.S. House as the Judiciary Committee on Friday approved charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. It's the latest major step in the constitutional and political storm that has divided Congress and the nation.

The House is expected to approve the two articles of impeachment next week, before lawmakers depart for the holidays.

The partisan split in the committee vote — 23 Democrats to 17 Republicans — reflects the atmosphere in Congress. The Democratic-majority House is expected to approve the charges against Trump next week, but the Republican-controlled Senate is likely to acquit him after a January trial.

Trump is accused, in the first article, of abusing his presidential power by asking Ukraine to investigate his 2020 rival Joe Biden while holding military aid as leverage, and, in the second, of obstructing Congress by blocking the House's efforts to probe his actions.

"Today is a solemn and sad day," Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., told reporters after the session, marking the third time in U.S. history the panel had voted to recommend impeaching a president. He said the full House would act "expeditiously."

At the White House after the votes, Trump denounced the inquiry and actions against him, using the terms he's relied on for months. He referred to the impeachment effort four times as a hoax, twice as a sham and once each as a scam, a witch hunt and a disgrace. He described his actions as perfect three times and said four times he did nothing wrong.

When he had asked Ukraine to "do us a favor" in the July phone call that sparked the impeachment inquiry, he said, the "us" referred to the U.S., not a political favor for himself.

Trump noted that he watched "quite a bit" of the previous day's proceedings and determined Democrats were making fools of themselves. He derided the government officials who testified that he pressured Ukraine and he claimed he was benefiting politically from impeachment.

Voting was swift and solemn, with none of the fiery speeches and weighty nods to history that defined the previous two days of debate, including 14 hours that stretched nearly to midnight Thursday. Nadler abruptly halted that rancorous session so voting could be held in daylight, for all Americans to see.

Nadler, who had said he wanted lawmakers to "search their consciences" before casting their votes, gaveled in the landmark but brief morning session at the Capitol.

Lawmakers responded "aye" or "yes" for the Democrats, and simple:"no's" from the Republicans.

"The article is agreed to," Nadler declared after each vote.

The top Republican on the panel Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia immediately said he would file dissenting views.

Minutes after the morning session opened, it was gaveled shut.

Trump is only the fourth U.S. president to face impeachment proceedings and the first to be running for reelection at the same time. The outcome of the eventual House votes pose potentially serious political consequences for both parties ahead of the 2020 elections, with Americans deeply divided over whether the president indeed conducted impeachable acts and if it should be up to Congress, or the voters, to decide whether he should remain in office.

Rep. Debbie Lesko, R-Ariz., defended the president against what she called "unfair, rigged" proceedings. "They had no proof, no evidence, no crime, but they went ahead anyway and they're tearing the country apart," she said.

Democrats countered they had no choice but to protect the 2020 election from further Trump outreach for foreign interference.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who held up a copy of the Constitution as she voted, called impeachment "a very necessary thing to save our democracy."

The president has refused to participate in the proceedings and instructed officials not to as well, tweeting criticisms from the sidelines and mocking the charges against him in the House's nine-page resolution as "impeachment light." But House Speaker Pelosi said the president was wrong and the case against him is deeply grounded.

Democrats contend that Trump has engaged in a pattern of misconduct toward Russia dating back to the 2016 election campaign that special counsel Robert Mueller investigated. And they say his dealings with Ukraine have benefited its aggressive neighbor Russia, not the U.S., and he must be prevented from "corrupting" U.S. elections again and cheating his way to a second term next year.

THE HOUSE IS EXPECTED TO APPROVE THE TWO ARTICLES OF IMPEACHMENT NEXT WEEK, BEFORE LAWMAKERS DEPART FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

"It is urgent," Pelosi said.

With impeachment almost certain in the House, even with a smattering of defections from Democrats, particularly the freshman lawmakers seeking re-election in districts where Trump remains popular, the pressure will be on Republicans in the Senate to hold the line in support of the president.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said late Thursday on Fox News, "There is zero chance the president will be removed from office." He said the Democrats have a "weak case" and he hopes to have no GOP defections in the Senate.

Republican senators have been advocating for a swift trial next year. But Trump is eager for a showdown in the Senate that will not only acquit him of the charges, but provide vindication while inflicting political pain on Democrats.

"I'll do whatever I want," Trump told reporters. The president has indicated he wants a parade of witnesses at the Senate, including the still-anonymous government whistleblower who first alerted Congress to the Ukraine call. He tweeted favorably about the GOP "warriors" on the House committee. "I wouldn't mind a long process," Trump said.

McConnell said he'll take cues from the president's lawyers, even as he stresses the risks of a drawn-out trial for Trump and the party, with a narrow 53-47 GOP Senate majority. It will take just 51 votes in the Senate to accept or reject witnesses, or take other actions, and McConnell could easily lose control.

"You could certainly make the case for making it shorter rather than longer," he said.

The Judiciary Committee session drew out over two days, much of the time spent in fights over amendments, a long and bitter slog through failed Republican amendments aimed at killing the impeachment charges.

Rep. David Cicilline, D-R.I., argued there was "overwhelming evidence" that the president with his lawyer Rudy Giuliani, in pushing Ukraine to investigate rival Biden, was engaged in an abuse of power "to corrupt American elections."

Bringing even more attention to the situation, Giuliani showed up at the White House on Friday. Just back from Ukraine, he was expected to brief Trump on his search for information on Biden that Trump discussed in the July call. Many GOP lawmakers are trying to ignore Giuliani, blaming him for Trump's predicament.

After lawmakers trudged through two days of hearings, tempers still flared Friday.

"My vote is no," said Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas. Then, before the tally was announced, he inquired how his vote was recorded by the clerk. "I want to make sure."

Much of time late in the night Thursday was spent in fights over amendments. Typical was the first amendment, offered by GOP Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, who tried to delete the first charge against Trump. "This amendment strikes article one because article one ignores the truth," he declared.

It was defeated, 23-17, on a party line vote, as were all the others that followed.

Debate dragged on with familiar arguments: Democrats cited evidence they said showed Trump's misconduct, while Republicans insisted the entire investigation was bogus.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Alan Fram and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

As California thins forests to limit fire risk, some resist

By MATTHEW BROWN and CHRISTINA LARSON
Associated Press

SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS, Calif. — Buzzing chainsaws are interrupted by the frequent crash of breaking branches as crews fell towering trees and clear tangled brush in the densely forested Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco.

Their goal: To protect communities such as Redwood Estates, where giant redwoods loom over the houses of tech workers who live in the wooded community just 20 miles from the heart of Silicon Valley. With California's increasingly warm, dry and overgrown landscape, wildfire has become a perpetual danger.

Among the most important tools the state has against fires is to mimic their effects: thinning trees and brush by hand to reduce the amount of vegetation that would become fuel in a fire, and using controlled burns to keep undergrowth and shrub lands in check.

State lawmakers committed more than $200 million annually to fire prevention efforts and Gov. Gavin Newsom wants to spend even more, motivated by infernos such as one last year that killed 85 people in Paradise, California, some who died in their cars while trying to flee.

Yet officials say efforts to make areas such as this road corridor in Northern California more fire safe are undercut by property owners who refuse to let fire crews work on their property. Offered the choice between clearing vegetation-choked areas or retaining greenery that acts as a shield against the din of the nearby highway, a small minority opted for privacy over safety or said they'd do the work themselves.

Matthew Brown/AP Photo

David Gonzalez, left, with ArborWorks cuts a eucalyptus tree after felling it to reduce wildfire dangers for communities living along California's Route 17 near Holy City.

That means patches of low-lying shrubs and some thickets of trees will remain when the job wraps up next year. As a result, future fires will retain potential avenues to spread into residential areas and threaten people and property.

"It's a chink in the armor," said Ed Orre, division chief with Cal Fire, the state's firefighting and fire prevention agency. "If that property catches fire, then you get a chain-reaction, domino effect... It compromises the effectiveness of the entire project."

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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

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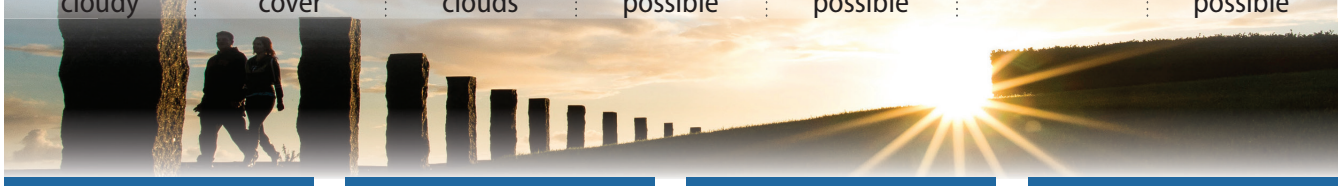
TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
47 33	47 36	48 37	49 37	48 39	48 42	51 41
An a.m. shower; cloudy	A thick cloud cover	Some sun, then clouds	Showers possible	Cloudy, rain possible	Rain	Cloudy, rain possible



ALMANAC

Astoria through Thursday

Temperatures

High/low	51/45
Normal high/low	49/36
Record high	61 in 2002
Record low	10 in 1919

Precipitation

Thursday	0.61"
Month to date	2.70"
Normal month to date	4.03"
Year to date	43.65"
Normal year to date	61.40"

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2019

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: The Geminid meteor shower peaks.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:50 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:30 p.m.
Moonrise today	7:11 p.m.
Moonset today	10:11 a.m.

Last	New	First	Full
Dec 18	Dec 25	Jan 2	Jan 10

TODAY'S TIDES

Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
Astoria / Port Docks			
3:01 a.m.	7.5	8:23 a.m.	3.4
1:53 p.m.	9.3	9:12 p.m.	-0.8
Cape Disappointment			
2:32 a.m.	7.3	7:24 a.m.	3.5
1:34 p.m.	8.9	8:16 p.m.	-1.3
Hammond			
2:47 a.m.	7.7	7:48 a.m.	3.5
1:44 p.m.	9.5	8:37 p.m.	-1.2
Warrenton			
2:56 a.m.	7.9	8:07 a.m.	3.5
1:48 p.m.	9.7	8:56 p.m.	-0.7
Knappa			
3:38 a.m.	7.8	9:24 a.m.	3.0
2:30 p.m.	9.5	10:13 p.m.	-0.7
Depoe Bay			
1:47 a.m.	7.6	6:53 a.m.	3.7
12:44 p.m.	9.4	7:48 p.m.	-1.2

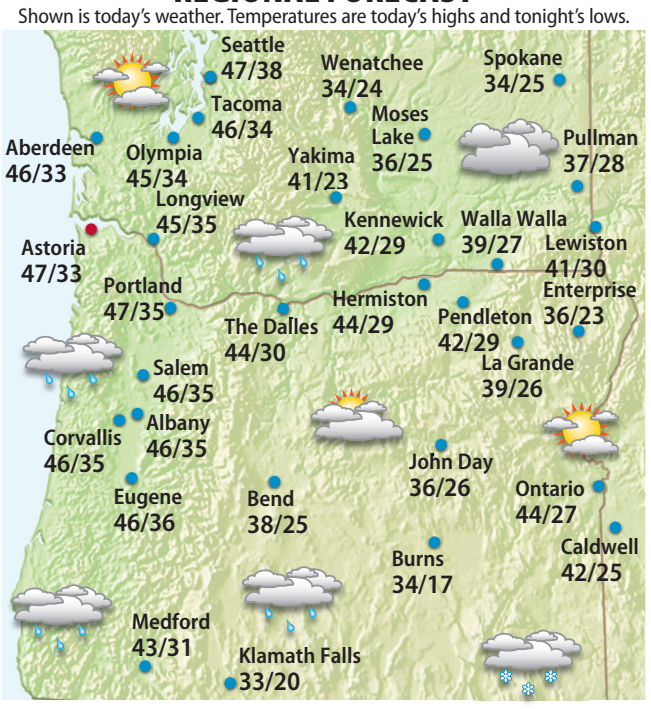
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	56/40/pc	60/50/s
Boston	56/46/r	50/32/pc
Chicago	37/19/c	29/21/pc
Dallas	64/46/s	68/47/pc
Denver	35/19/pc	29/17/sn
Honolulu	84/72/pc	84/72/s
Houston	73/58/s	81/68/c
Los Angeles	64/50/c	64/43/s
Miami	85/65/t	80/70/s
New York City	57/45/r	49/32/pc
Phoenix	71/49/pc	63/43/s
San Francisco	57/47/pc	57/44/pc
Wash., DC	53/41/r	51/35/pc

Weather (W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

REGIONAL FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W	City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Sun. Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	38/19/c	35/15/sf	North Bend	49/39/r	49/37/c
Brookings	48/39/r	50/42/c	Roseburg	45/36/r	46/34/c
Ilwaco	47/36/pc	47/39/c	Seaside	47/35/sh	47/35/c
Newberg	45/32/c	43/32/c	Springfield	46/37/r	47/31/c
Newport	47/37/r	48/39/c	Vancouver	46/35/sh	43/33/c