Trump's lawyers urge dismissal of 'flimsy' impeachment

By ZEKE MILLER, ERIC TUCKER and LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

'ALL OF THIS IS A DANGEROUS PERVERSION OF THE CONSTITUTION THAT THE SENATE SHOULD SWIFTLY AND ROUNDLY CONDEMN. THE ARTICLES SHOULD BE REJECTED AND THE PRESIDENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY BE ACQUITTED.'

excerpt from brief from Trump's lawyers

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's legal team asserted Monday he did "absolutely nothing wrong," urging the Senate to swiftly reject the "flimsy" impeachment case against him as rigged, while the Capitol braced for a contentious trial.

The brief from Trump's lawyers, filed as senators prepare to return to Washington for opening arguments, offers the most detailed look at the lines of defense they intend to use against Democratic efforts to convict the president and oust him from office over his dealings with Ukraine. It is meant as a counter to a filing two days ago from House Democrats that summarized weeks of testimony from more than a dozen witnesses in laying out the impeachment case.

"All of this is a dangerous perversion of the Constitution that the Senate should swiftly and roundly condemn," the lawyers wrote. "The articles should be rejected and the president should immediately be acquitted."

The 110-page brief from the White House, plus a scheduled House Democratic response, come as final preparations were underway at the Capitol for the Senate trial. With the trial taking place in an election year, some of the very senators running to replace Trump as president are sitting as jurors.

The White House filing shifted the tone toward a more legal response but still echoed with campaign-style slogans. It hinged on Trump's assertion he did nothing wrong and did not commit a crime — even though impeachment does not depend on a material violation of law but rather on the more vague definition of "other high crimes and misdemeanors" as established in the Constitution.

With security tightening at the Capitol, the House prosecutors made their way through crowds of tourists in the Rotunda to tour the Senate chamber. The White House legal team led by Pat Cipollone and Jay Sekulow soon followed, both sides under instructions to keep the chamber doors closed to onlookers and the press. Four TV monitors were set up inside to show testimony, exhibits and potentially tweets or other social media, according to a person familiar with the matter but unauthorized to discuss it who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Senators are poised for only the third trial of its kind in U.S. history but first they must contend with a rules fight and whether to allow new witnesses. The White House legal team said Monday it supports whatever package Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell puts forward, including one that would give both sides 24 hours over just two days each to argue their case.

In their own filing Monday, House prosecutors replied to Trump's not guilty plea by making fresh demands for a fair trial in the Senate.

"President Trump asserts that his impeachment is a partisan 'hoax.' He is wrong," the prosecutors wrote.

The House Democrats led by Chairman Adam Schiff of the Intelligence Committee said the president can't have it both ways — rejecting the facts of the House case but also stonewalling congressional subpoenas for witnesses and testimony. "Senators must honor their own oaths by holding a fair trial with all relevant evidence," they wrote.

The White House document released Monday says the two articles of impeachment brought against the president — abuse of power and obstruction of Congress — don't amount to impeachment offenses. It asserts that the impeachment inquiry, centered on Trump's request that Ukraine's president open an investigation into Democratic rival Joe Biden, was never about finding the truth.

"Instead, House Democrats were determined from the outset to find some way — any way — to corrupt the extraordinary power of impeachment for use as a political tool to overturn the result of the 2016 election and to interfere in the 2020 election," Trump's legal team wrote. "All of that is a dangerous perversion of the Constitution that the Senate should swiftly and roundly condemn."

The impeachment case accuses Trump of abusing power by withholding military aid from Ukraine at the same time that he was seeking an investigation into Biden, and of obstructing Congress by instructing administration officials not to appear for testimony or provide documents, defying congressional subpoenas.

In a brief filed earlier, House Democrats called Trump's conduct the "worst nightmare" of the framers of the Constitution.

"President Donald J. Trump used his official powers to pressure a foreign government to interfere in a United States election for his personal political gain," the House prosecutors wrote, "and then attempted to cover up his scheme by obstructing Congress's investigation into his misconduct."

But Trump's team contended Monday that even if Trump were to have abused his power in withholding the Ukraine military assistance, it would not be impeachable, because it did not violate a specific criminal statute.

The president's team issued several opinions from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel to back up its claims and support its position that it had not illegally defied Congress.

One OLC opinion said the House investigation was not formally opened until after some subpoenas were issued, making the demands legally unenforceable, while two others said that senior advisers of the president were immune from being forced to testify in part because they handled national security matters.

Opening arguments are expected within days following a debate Tuesday over rules, including about whether witnesses are to be called in the trial.

Trump signaled his opposition to witnesses, tweeting Monday: "They didn't want John Bolton and others in the House. They were in too much of a rush. Now they want them all in the Senate. Not supposed to be that way!"

That's a reference to former national security adviser John Bolton. House Democrats wanted him to testify but chose not to pursue a subpoena and risk an extended struggle in court. But he has said he is willing to testify in the Senate if subpoenaed.

Trump takes victory lap at farm bureau convention

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

The serpentine throng of people waiting to clear a security checkpoint and see President Donald Trump was no deterrent to Texas cattleman Larry Bumpurs.

With Trump's successful trade negotiations and his "draining the swamp" of overzealous federal bureaucrats, it was time well spent to hear the president speak at the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention, Bumpurs said.

"This line is too short for me to tell you everything I like about Trump," he said.

Though the president may be criticized for his rancorous approach to politics, that's of less consequence than his ability to get things done for agriculture, said Joe Cater, a fellow Texas cattlemen attending Trump's Sunday speech in Austin, Texas.

"This is not a personality contest," Cater said.

Bumpurs echoed this sentiment, noting that he wouldn't be troubled even if Trump would "fart in public."

"He don't have an edit button on his mouth," Bumpurs said.

Trump's popularity among growers attending the Farm Bureau's 101st convention — his third annual appearance at the event — was never much in question.

As the president pointed out during his speech, a recent poll pegged his approval rating at an all-time high of 83% among farmers.

"I'm wondering, who are the 17%?" Trump asked the crowd, referring to disapproving farmers. "Who the hell are the 17%?"

After a moment, Trump seemed to reconsider the question.

"Don't raise your hand," he joked.

While his previous appearances before the Farm Bureau were also met with gusto, Trump's hardline approach to trade has been a source of concern for farmers who are particularly dependent on exports.

This time around, though, the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and a partial resolution of the trade dispute with China appeared to relieve some of the tension about Trump's strategy.

Trump himself acknowledged the economic pain that farmers have suffered from the trade conflict with China, saying they were "targeted" with retaliatory tariffs on agricultural goods.

He thanked the crowd for standing with him and noted it was their "fortitude, devotion and perseverance that made it all possible."

"Sometimes, you have to walk away from a deal to make the right deal," Trump said. "And we had to walk away from this deal a lot, didn't we?"

Farmers for Free Trade, a nonprofit that's openly argued against trade hostilities, is not fully convinced the "phase one" agreement with China will calm the waters.

China has committed to purchasing up to $40 billion of U.S. farm products during each of the next two years, roughly doubling the amount it bought before the trade dispute erupted.

"We're skeptical that's going to happen," said Brian Kuehl, the group's co-executive director.

The agreement is written with enough wiggle room for China to try renege on that commitment by arguing market conditions don't justify the higher import levels, he said.

"I'm worried the U.S. and China are talking past each other," he said.

The deal doesn't explicitly eliminate tariffs on U.S. farm products and it's hard to envision how farmers can increase their exports unless China takes that step, Kuehl said.

Ramping up crop and meat shipments also takes time, he said. "The trade war has disrupted our supply chains."

Even so, Kuehl said he credits the deal for finally reducing non-tariff trade barriers by standardizing import procedures for meat, milk and crops that have been in discussions for years.

"The Trump administration has carried it across the finish line and that's good, that's what we want to see happen," he said.

American Farm Bureau Federation

President Donald Trump speaks at the American Farm Bureau Federation convention Sunday in Austin, Texas.

SEVEN-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA

AccuWeather – DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
50 44	51 49	53 47	54 47	53 44	53 43	52 43
Breezy with rain	Breezy with rain	Periods of rain	Rain	Showers possible	Cloudy	A chance of rain

ALMANAC

Astoria through Sunday

Temperatures

High/low	59/46
Normal high/low	50/38
Record high	66 in 2005
Record low	16 in 1935

Precipitation

Sunday	0.11″
Month to date	9.02″
Normal month to date	6.56″
Year to date	9.02″
Normal year to date	6.56″

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather, Inc.** ©2020

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Due south, the Winter Circle is in good view by around nightfall and fills almost an entire quadrant of the sky.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise today	7:50 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:04 p.m.
Moonrise today	5:15 a.m.
Moonset today	2:15 p.m.

New	First	Full	Last
Jan 24	Feb 1	Feb 8	Feb 15

TODAY'S TIDES

Time	High (ft.)	Time	Low (ft.)
Astoria / Port Docks			
10:01 a.m.	9.0	4:02 a.m.	3.4
11:41 p.m.	7.1	5:24 p.m.	-0.2
Cape Disappointment			
9:41 a.m.	9.1	3:17 a.m.	3.9
11:36 p.m.	7.0	4:40 p.m.	-0.1
Hammond			
9:52 a.m.	9.3	3:39 a.m.	3.5
11:39 p.m.	7.2	4:54 p.m.	-0.4
Warrenton			
9:56 a.m.	9.4	3:46 a.m.	3.5
11:36 p.m.	7.5	5:08 p.m.	-0.1
Knappa			
10:38 a.m.	9.2	5:03 a.m.	2.9
none		6:25 p.m.	-0.1
Depoe Bay			
8:55 a.m.	9.3	2:46 a.m.	4.0
10:52 p.m.	7.0	4:10 p.m.	-0.3

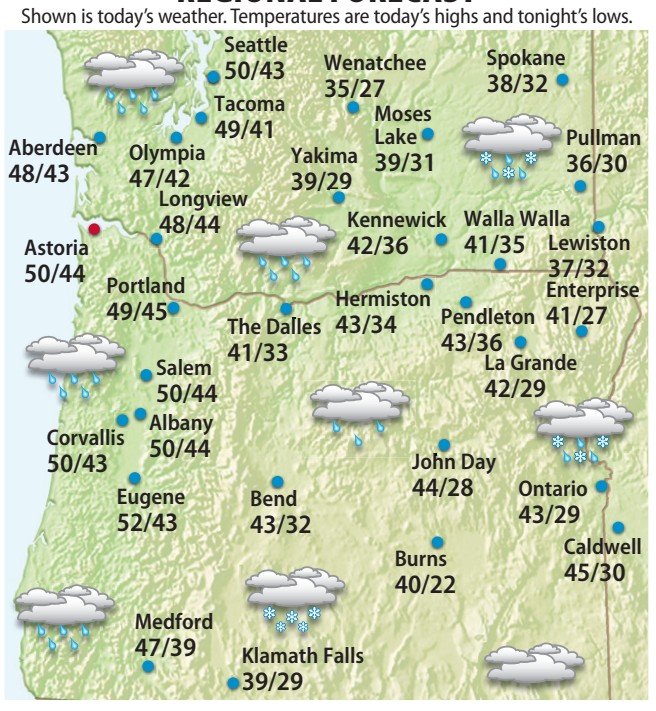
NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	43/26/s	50/34/s
Boston	29/20/s	37/27/s
Chicago	27/18/s	34/29/pc
Dallas	54/39/pc	49/44/r
Denver	51/30/c	52/25/c
Honolulu	81/67/pc	81/65/pc
Houston	58/40/pc	58/54/r
Los Angeles	64/49/pc	65/49/s
Miami	71/43/pc	67/62/sh
New York City	35/26/s	38/29/s
Phoenix	64/49/pc	68/48/s
San Francisco	57/49/r	59/46/pc
Wash., DC	39/24/s	43/28/s

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	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
Baker City	41/26/sf	39/34/sh
Brookings	50/44/r	51/50/sh
Ilwaco	50/45/r	52/50/r
Newberg	49/44/r	50/48/r
Newport	50/45/r	51/49/r

City	Today Hi/Lo/W	Wed. Hi/Lo/W
North Bend	52/46/r	54/49/r
Roseburg	54/44/r	54/46/r
Seaside	50/45/r	52/50/r
Springfield	52/44/r	51/49/r
Vancouver	49/44/r	49/47/r