

Democrats appeal for GOP help to convict Trump

By **LISA MASCARO, ERIC TUCKER and ZEKE MILLER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Democrats opened marathon arguments in President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial Wednesday, appealing to skeptical Republican senators to join them in voting to remove Trump from office to “protect our democracy.”

Trump’s lawyers sat by, waiting their turn, as the president blasted the proceedings from afar, threatening jokingly to face off with the Democrats by coming to “sit right in the front row and stare at their corrupt faces.”

The challenge before the House managers is clear. Democrats have 24 hours over three days to prosecute the charges against Trump, trying to win over not just fidgety senators sitting silently in the chamber but an American public, deeply divided over the president and his impeachment in an election year.

Rep. Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, outlined what the Democrats contend was the president’s “corrupt scheme” to abuse his presidential power and then obstruct Congress’ investigation. He then called on senators not to be “cynical” about politics, but to draw on the intent of the nation’s Founding Fathers who provided the remedy of impeachment.

“Over the coming days, we will present to you — and to the American people — the extensive evidence collected during the House’s impeachment inquiry into the president’s abuse of power,” said Schiff standing before the Senate. “You will hear their testimony at the same time as the American people. That is, if you



President Donald Trump’s personal attorney Jay Sekulow, left, gestures while standing with White House Counsel Pat Cipollone, right, while arriving at the Capitol on Wednesday.

will allow it.”

Most senators sat at their desks throughout, as the rules stipulate, though some stretched their legs, standing behind the desks or against the back wall of the chamber.

The proceedings are unfolding at the start of an election year and there are few signs that Republican are interested in calling more witnesses or going beyond a fast-track assessment to bring a quick vote on charges related to Trump’s dealings with Ukraine.

The trial marks just the third time the Senate has weighed whether an American president should be removed from office. Democrats argue Trump abused his office by asking Ukraine to investigate political rival Joe Biden while withholding crucial military aid, and also obstructed Congress by refusing to turn over documents or allow officials to testify in the House probe. Republicans have defended Trump’s actions and cast the process as a politically moti-

vated effort to weaken the president in the midst of his reelection campaign.

A new poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows the public is slightly more likely to say the Senate should convict and remove Trump from office than to say it should not, 45% to 40%. But a sizable percentage, 14%, say they don’t know enough to have an opinion.

One question there’s wide agreement on: Trump should allow top aides to appear as witnesses at the trial. About 7 in 10 said so, including majorities of Republicans and Democrats, according to the poll.

The idea of more witnesses, though, seems all but settled. Wrangling over rules for the trial stretched past midnight Tuesday night, with Republicans shooting down one-by-one Democratic efforts to get Trump aides including former national security adviser John Bolton, Secretary of

State Mike Pompeo and acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, to testify.

Senators are likely to repeat those rejections next week, shutting out any chance of new testimony.

One longshot idea to pair one of Trump’s preferred witnesses — Biden’s son Hunter Biden — with Bolton or another that Democrats want was swiftly rejected.

“That’s off the table,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer told reporters.

Chief Justice John Roberts gavelled open Wednesday’s session as senators settled in for the long days ahead.

Trump, who was in Davos, Switzerland, attending a global economic forum, praised his legal team, and suggested he would be open to his advisers testifying, though that seems unlikely. He said there were “national security” concerns that would stand in the way.

After the House prosecutors present their case, the president’s lawyers will fol-

THE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL IS SET AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE 2020 ELECTION. ALL FOUR SENATORS WHO ARE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ARE OFF THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL, SEATED AS JURORS.

low with another 24 hours over three days. They are expected to take only Sunday off.

“There’s a lot of things I’d like to rebut,” said Trump lawyer Jay Sekulow at the Capitol, “and we will rebut.”

Then there will be 16 hours for senators, who must sit quietly at their desks, no speeches or cellphones, to ask written question, and another four hours for deliberations.

The impeachment trial is set against the backdrop of the 2020 election. All four senators who are Democratic presidential candidates are off the campaign trail, seated as jurors.

Campaigning at stops in Iowa, Joe Biden also rejected having his son testify, or even appearing himself. “I want no part of that,” he said.

Ahead of opening arguments, senators, particularly Republicans, were alternately restless, bored and exhausted by the proceedings.

GOP Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa spoke sarcastically about how excited she was to hear the “overwhelming evidence” the House Democrats have against Trump. “And once we’ve heard that overwhelming evidence,” she added, raising her voice mockingly, “I don’t know that we’ll need to see additional witnesses, but let’s hear about that overwhelming evidence.”

The trial began with a setback on Tuesday for Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, who backed off his plans to limit each side’s arguments to two days, as the White House had preferred.

But the GOP leader has been skilled at keeping even the most wayward Republicans, those with some concerns about Trump, united in battling back Democratic requests for witnesses and testimony. They ultimately approved a rules package that pushes off a final decision on whether or not to seek additional testimony until late in the trial.

Schumer bemoaned the remaining limitations, saying Wednesday the impeachment trial “begins with a cloud hanging over it, a cloud of unfairness.”

Republicans are eager for a swift trial. Yet Trump’s legal team passed on an opportunity to file a motion to dismiss the case on Wednesday, an acknowledgement that there were not enough Republican votes to support it.

The White House legal team, in its court filings and presentations, has not disputed Trump’s actions. But the lawyers insist the president did nothing wrong.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Alan Fram, Andrew Taylor, Laurie Kellman, Matthew Daly, Padmananda Rama and Bill Barrow contributed to this report.

Trump announces expanded travel ban

Seven nations proposed

By **COLLEEN LONG, MATTHEW LEE and JONATHAN LEMIRE**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Wednesday the U.S. would soon be imposing visa restrictions on more countries — though it’s not clear yet how many nations will be affected by his expansion of the travel ban.

Seven additional nations were listed in a draft of the proposed restrictions — but the countries were notified by Homeland Security officials that they could avoid being included if they make changes before the announcement is made, according to two administration officials who spoke to he Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing negotiations.

The tentative list featured Belarus, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan and Tanzania, according to the officials and a person familiar with the draft proposal. But several countries are believed to have taken action or demonstrated good faith efforts to comply in order to avoid inclusion, the officials said. The steps include better border security, better sharing of identification information among nations and better travel document security, one official said. It’s not clear how many nations will wind up on the final list.

Trump told reporters at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that he’s doing it to protect the United States.

“We’re adding a couple of



President Donald Trump leaves the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Wednesday.

countries to it,” he said. “We have to be safe. Our country has to be safe. You see what’s going on in the world. Our country has to be safe. So we have a very strong travel ban and we’ll be adding a few countries to it.”

The Trump administration also announced it will roll out new visa restrictions Thursday aimed at restricting “birth tourism,” in which women travel to the U.S. to give birth so their children can have a coveted U.S. passport.

Visa applicants deemed by consular officers to be coming to the U.S. primarily to give birth will now be treated like other foreigners coming to the U.S. for medical treatment, according to State Department guidance sent Wednesday and viewed by the Associated Press. The applicants will have to prove they are coming for medical treatment and they have the money to pay for it.

Five of the countries on the draft list have either Mus-

lim majorities or substantial Muslim minorities.

The current ban suspends immigrant and non-immigrant visas to applicants from five majority-Muslim nations: Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, as well as Venezuela and North Korea.

But it allows exceptions, including for students and those who have established “significant contacts” in the U.S. And it represents a significant softening from Trump’s initial order, which had suspended travel from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen for 90 days, blocked refugee admissions for 120 days and suspended travel from Syria.

That order was immediately blocked by the courts, prompting a months-long effort by the administration

to develop clear standards and federal review processes to try to pass legal muster. Under the current system, restrictions are targeted at countries that Homeland Security says fail to share sufficient information with the U.S. or haven’t taken necessary security precautions, such as issuing electronic passports with biometric information and sharing information about travelers’ terror-related and criminal histories.

Iraq, Sudan and Chad had been affected by the original order, which the Supreme Court upheld in a 5-4 vote after the administration released a watered-down version intended to withstand legal scrutiny. They were not part of the pared-down version.

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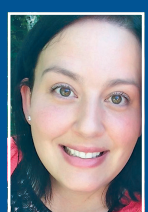
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