

Impeach or not impeach? Pelosi says focus first on facts

By LAURIE KELLMAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi urged divided fellow Democrats Monday to focus on fact-finding rather than leaping to talk of impeachment to hold President Donald Trump accountable for the “highly unethical and unscrupulous behavior” described in special counsel Robert Mueller’s report.

In her first remarks on next steps, Pelosi acknowledged in a letter to rank-and-file Democrats that the party’s officeholders have a range of views on how to proceed. But she counseled them repeatedly to go after facts, not resort to “passion or prejudice” in the intense run-up to the 2020 presidential and congressional elections.

“We all firmly agree that we should proceed down a path of finding the truth,” Pelosi wrote. “It is also important to know that the facts regarding holding the president accountable can be gained outside of impeachment hearings.”



AP Photo/Liam McBurney
Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the United States House of Representatives, faces the media with Richard Neal, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and members of an American delegation during a press conference in the Parliament Building in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Friday.

Either way, Trump insisted he wasn’t worried.

“Not even a little bit,” he said when asked Monday whether he was concerned about impeachment. However, his tweets seeking to undermine the report’s credibility — even calling it “bullshit” — indicate he is hardly shrugging it aside.

“Only high crimes and misdemeanors can lead to impeachment,” he said Monday on Twitter. “There were no crimes by me (No Collusion, No Obstruction), so you can’t impeach. It was the Democrats that committed the crimes, not your Republican President!”

Mueller’s report last

week described in vivid detail episodes in which Trump is said to have dispatched allies to fire Mueller, shut down his investigation and lie. The strength of the findings kicked off a struggle among Democrats over what to do now — show restraint and investigate, or try to impeach?

The debate now stretches from the Capitol to the campaign trail, where the party’s 18-plus candidates are divided as they battle for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Until one is crowned next year, Pelosi is the de facto leader of the party. On Monday, she stuck to her long-time advice to go with investigations and facts, rather than passionate declarations of how to make Trump pay for his conduct.

“We must show the American people we are proceeding free from passion or prejudice, strictly on the presentation of fact,” she wrote. She added: “Whether currently indictable or not, it is clear that the president has, at a minimum, engaged in highly unethical and unscrupulous behavior which does not bring honor to the office he holds.”

A series of hearings and investigations is likely to keep in public unflattering details about Trump’s behavior provided both by the report and by his former legal fixer, Michael Cohen. Congressional panels are

demanding the unredacted version of the Mueller report and its underlying material gathered from the investigation. Attorney General William Barr is expected to testify in the House and Senate next week. And House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., has summoned Mueller to testify next month.

What’s different after the report’s release is the detailed evidence that the president tried to shut down or stall Mueller’s investigation, a commander in chief having his top lieutenants lie or obfuscate on his behalf. The fact that many refused to do so may have helped save Trump from grave political danger.

Congress has additional options, and key chairmen have been clear that they believe the Mueller report provides enough detail to implicate Trump in obstruction of justice. But there is no impeachment effort underway, in part because Democratic leaders have said there would have to be bipartisan sentiment for such proceedings.

Trump, business organization sue Democratic House chairman

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and his business organization sued the Democratic chairman of the House oversight committee on Monday to block a subpoena that seeks years of the president’s financial records.

The complaint became the latest front in the intensifying battle between the president and the Democrats who control the House of Representatives and are committed to investigating Trump and his finances. The complaint, filed in federal court in Washington, said the subpoena from Rep. Eli-

jah Cummings “has no legitimate legislative purpose” and accuses Democrats of harassing Trump and wielding their new majority in Congress to try to stain the president’s standing.

“Instead of working with the President to pass bipartisan legislation that would actually benefit Americans, House Democrats are singularly obsessed with finding something they can use to damage the President politically,” the lawsuit states.

Cummings, a Maryland Democrat and chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, issued the subpoena earlier this month to Mazars USA,



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais
President Donald Trump, right, waves as he and first lady Melania Trump board Air Force One prior to departure from Palm Beach International Airport on Sunday in Florida.

an accountant for the president and Trump Organization. He said Monday that the complaint “reads more

like political talking points than a reasoned legal brief, and it contains a litany of inaccurate information.”

“The President has a long history of trying to use baseless lawsuits to attack his adversaries, but there is simply no valid legal basis to interfere with this duly authorized subpoena from Congress,” Cummings said. “The White House is engaged in unprecedented stonewalling on all fronts, and they have refused to produce a single document or witness to the Oversight Committee during this entire year.”

The lawsuit accuses Cummings of failing to consult with Republicans on the panel before issuing the subpoena and says he relied on the testimony of Trump’s

former personal attorney, Michael Cohen, who told lawmakers in February that some of Trump’s financial statements contained inaccuracies. Cohen pleaded guilty last year to lying to Congress in 2017 about a real estate deal involving Trump in Moscow.

The suit amounts to Trump — the leader of the executive branch of government — asking the judicial branch to stop the legislative branch from investigating his past. To do so would break decades of precedent, which established that the legislature’s investigative power is not limited to just researching possible legislation.



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