

Speaker Asks Judiciary Committee to Begin Drafting Articles of Impeachment

December 5, 2019 **by Dan McCue**



WASHINGTON – House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Thursday that she’s asked the House Judiciary Committee to proceed with drafting impeachment articles against President Donald Trump.

The move by the speaker advances the timetable for impeachment, setting the stage for a vote by the full House of Representatives before Christmas.

“His wrongdoing strikes at the very heart of our Constitution,” Pelosi said. “Our democracy is what is at stake. The president leaves us no choice but to act because he is trying to corrupt, once again, the election for his own benefit.”

Underscoring the gravity of her announcement, Pelosi delivered it against a backdrop of American flags from the balcony outside her office in the Capitol.

“The facts are uncontested,” she said. “The president abused his power for his own personal political benefit, at the expense of our national security.”

Pelosi said she made the decision to authorize the drafting of articles of impeachment “sadly but with confidence and humility.”

Her announcement came a day after she met behind closed doors with her Democratic caucus, asking its members, “Are you ready?”

According to published reports, the answer was a resounding yes.

The House Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on Monday morning to receive presentations of evidence from investigators as it moves forward with crafting articles of impeachment against the president.

Monday’s hearing, which will start at 9 a.m., will feature presentations from staff counsels for both parties on the House Intelligence and Judiciary committees.

On Wednesday morning Trump tweeted that if Democrats “are going to impeach me, do it now, fast.” He said he wants to get on to a “fair trial” in the Senate. The president also said that Democrats have “gone crazy.”

In a statement, the White House denounced Pelosi, accusing her of ignoring the needs of the American people to “advance her selfish political desires.”

“[The] Democrats’ sham impeachment is a blatant, purely partisan attempt to overturn the results of a free and fair election,” the statement continued. “By their own admission, Democrats say they have to “impeach the President” because they cannot defeat him at the ballot box.”

It closed by asking “How many Democrats will join her driving right off the cliff with this illegitimate impeachment hoax?”

“Speaker Pelosi’s instruction to advance this impeachment process – one that has violated every precedent – moves this Country toward the most partisan and illegitimate subversion of the Constitution in our history,” the White House said.

Later, ahead of a meeting with the permanent representatives of the United Nations Security Council, the president himself responded to the day’s developments.

In answer to a reporter’s question in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Trump said he is “not at all” worried about the effect of impeachment on his legacy.

“It’s a hoax. It’s a hoax. It’s a big fat hoax,” he said.

“But impeaching the President has always been their goal, so they should just get on with it so we can have a fair trial in the Senate and expose The Swamp for what it is. Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Schiff, and Hunter Biden should testify, and then we can get back to the business of our country,” he added.

Pelosi’s directive also came a day after three of four constitutional scholars told the House Judiciary Committee that Trump engaged in conduct that clearly met the definition of impeachable offenses under the Constitution.

The fourth scholar, called by the committee's Republican members, strenuously disagreed, warning that if the House moved forward with drafting articles of impeachment, the proceedings would be the shortest in history, and the decision would be based on the "thinnest" record of evidence in modern times, setting a troubling standard.

The judiciary committee hearing on Wednesday followed a two-month investigation by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

That committee concluded Trump did abuse the power of his office by pressuring President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine to announce investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden Jr. and other Democrats, while withholding a White House meeting and nearly \$400 million in vital military assistance.

"Never before, in the history of the republic, have we been forced to consider the conduct of a president who appears to have solicited personal, political favors from a foreign government," said Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., chair of the Judiciary panel.

"We cannot wait for the election," he said. "If we do not act to hold him in check, now, President Trump will almost certainly try again to solicit interference in the election for his personal political gain."

Republicans on both committees, meanwhile, continue to dismiss the impeachment inquiry as a "sham" and a "hoax" perpetrated by Democrats who were disappointed Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election did not turn up impeachable offenses.

"You just don't like the guy," said Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia, the top Republican on the judiciary panel.

He also bemoaned the fact the judiciary committee had not taken the lead in the impeachment investigation.

“What a disgrace to this committee, to have the committee of impeachment simply take from other committees and rubber stamp,” Collins said.

Republican members on the committee repeatedly interrupted Nadler and the expert witnesses during Wednesday’s hearing, calling for more Republican witnesses, a postponement of the hearing and for House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff to testify.

Schiff led the Intelligence committee’s investigation into Trump’s dealings with Ukraine.

“If you want to know what’s really driving this, there are two things — a clock and a calendar,” Collins said.

Over the course of six hours of testimony, Noah Feldman, a Harvard Law School professor, said he considered it clear that the president’s conduct met the definition of “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

Michael Gerhardt, a University of North Carolina law professor, was also in favor of impeachment, saying “If what we’re talking about is not impeachable ... then nothing is impeachable.”

Pamela Karlan, a Stanford Law School professor, said the Founding Fathers were particularly concerned about foreign interference in American politics.

“The very idea that a president might seek the aid of a foreign government in his reelection campaign would have horrified them,” Karlan said. “But based on the evidentiary record, that is what President Trump has done.”

The Republicans' witness, Jonathan Turley, a law professor at George Washington University, said while he disagreed with the president's behavior, he believes the Democrats are bringing a "slipshod impeachment" case against the president.

"It is not wrong because President Trump is right," Turley said. "A case for impeachment could be made, but it cannot be made on this record."

The question now is just how broad the articles of impeachment will be. Liberal members of the Democratic caucus have called for incorporating the findings from former special counsel Robert Mueller's report on Russian interference in the 2016 election and other actions by Trump.

More centrist Democrats, meanwhile, including Rep. Nadler, want to keep the focus on Ukraine — a simpler narrative Americans understand.

A graphic displayed during the judiciary committee hearing on Wednesday listed three impeachable offences: abuse of power and bribery, obstruction of Congress, and obstruction of justice.

If the full House does vote for impeachment by Christmas, the matter will then move to the Senate for a trial beginning in January.

