House votes to kill impeachment effort against Trump

By Cristina Marcos - 07/17/19 05:40 PM EDT

The House on Wednesday voted 332-95 to kill the first articles of impeachment brought forward under the new Democratic majority, showing off a deep divide among Democrats on whether to go forward with an effort to unseat President Trump.

A majority of Democrats, along with the chamber's Republicans, voted to table the measure sponsored by Rep. Al Green (D-Texas), while 95 Democrats voted in favor of it.

It's the first time the Democratic House has been confronted with a vote on impeachment and comes a week before former special counsel Robert Mueller is set to testify before two committees on Capitol Hill.

Green, whose previous impeachment votes have accused Trump of inflaming racial tensions, offered the measure immediately after the House on Tuesday voted to condemn Trump over tweets targeting four minority Democratic congresswomen.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has sought to quash talk of impeachment, and her side won the vote Wednesday. But the vote also made clear a large number of Democrats want to take action against Trump even before hearing from Mueller.

Members of Democratic leadership voted with Republicans to table the resolution, including House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (Md.), Majority Whip James Clyburn (S.C.) and House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries (N.Y.).

Clyburn and Jeffries had previously voted for similar articles of impeachment from Green in the last Congress.

A number of Democrats — including some who backed Green — questioned their colleague's strategy in forcing a vote one week before Mueller's testimony on his report on Russia's election interference and Trump's efforts to obstruct the investigation.

"We've got to investigate and change public opinion," said Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.), who voted against tabling Green's measure and reintroduced an article of impeachment against Trump on the first day of the new Congress.

"This could be a small positive step, it could be a nullity," he said.

Some Democrats who support impeachment said they didn't think Green's resolution was the best path forward given that it doesn't include findings from the Mueller report.

"We must bring forward our best evidence on obstruction, emoluments violations, and other potential crimes — not simply focus on the president's latest horrible remarks, harmful though they are. I worry that the House of Representatives would forfeit its vital role in this process if today's resolution passed," Rep. Don Beyer (D-Va.) said in a statement.

House Budget Committee Chairman John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) voted to table the resolution even though he supports impeachment. Rep. Justin Amash (I-Mich.), who backs impeachment and left the Republican Party this summer essentially over Trump, also voted to table it.

The Democrats who voted against tabling Green's measure included House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (N.Y.) and the liberal congresswomen attacked by Trump this week, Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (N.Y.), Ilhan Omar (Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) and Ayanna Pressley (Mass.).

Reps. Mark Pocan (Wis.) and Pramila Jayapal (Wash.), the co-chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, also voted against tabling Green's articles, as did Rep. David Cicilline (R.I.), who heads the Democrats' messaging arm.

Other committee chairs also voted with Green: Financial Services Chairwoman Maxine Waters (Calif.), Natural Resources Chairman Raúl Grijalva (Ariz.), Homeland Security Chairman Bennie Thompson (Miss.), Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone Jr. (N.J.), Appropriations Chairwoman Nita Lowey (N.Y.), Rules Committee Chairman Jim McGovern (Mass.) and Small Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia Velázquez (N.Y.).

Pelosi reiterated Wednesday that she believes impeachment is premature but took care to praise Green personally as a "very prayerful person" who "cares very much about our Constitution and our country."

"We have six committees that are working on following the facts in terms of any abuse of power, obstruction of justice and the rest that the president may have engaged in. That is the serious path that we are on. Not that Mr. Green is not serious, but we'll deal with that on the floor," Pelosi said at a press conference in the Capitol.

Trump touted the failure of Green's effort, tweeting that impeachment is "perhaps the most ridiculous and time consuming project I have ever had to work on."

"This should never be allowed to happen to another President of the United States again!" he wrote.

In making the case for his resolution, Green argued that the House should go further than it did in condemning the president's remarks and move to impeach Trump for a pattern of inflaming racial tensions in America.

He forced a vote on his articles of impeachment by filing them as a "privileged" resolution, triggering a process that requires House floor action within two legislative days.

"Today's vote is to determine whether or not we will punish the president. The effort yesterday was wonderful. I supported it. But it does not punish the president," Green said in a House floor speech.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) moved to table Green's resolution, rather than Democratic leaders formally offering the motion themselves to cast the effort aside or opting to refer it to the Judiciary Committee.

After the vote, Green didn't rule out forcing the issue again on the floor.

"My hope is that we won't have to do this again," Green said. "But if necessary then we will."

The 95 votes in support of his resolution, Green said, "says to me that people appreciate that the president is unfit and should be removed from office."

Had the motion to table failed, it would have potentially led to a direct up-or-down vote on Green's resolution, though it is also possible a motion could have been made to refer the resolution to a committee.

Green maintained that the focus of his impeachment articles is separate from the Mueller report's findings.

"Obstruction has nothing to do with what we will vote on today. This is about what the president has done. You cannot incite people to harm other people with your words," Green said.

Green's articles of impeachment do not mention anything related to the Mueller report. Instead, the text cites the House vote to condemn Trump's tweets about the four congresswomen and states that he has "brought the high office of the president of the United States in contempt, ridicule, disgrace and disrepute" and "has sown discord among the people of the United States."

Green previously forced votes on impeachment in December 2017 and January 2018, which House GOP leaders moved to table. Each of those impeachment votes drew the support of about 60 Democrats.

Both of Green's previous efforts similarly focused on accusing Trump of inflaming racial tensions, like after the president referred to African nations as "shithole countries."

Scott Wong contributed.

Updated at 7:57 p.m.

https://thehill.com/homenews/house/453596-green-forces-impeachment-vote-against-trump