

Impeachment trial plans in disarray as Congress heads home for holidays

POSTED 8:50 PM, DECEMBER 19, 2019, BY AP WIRE SERVICE



WASHINGTON — Congress has headed home for the holidays leaving plans and a possible timeline for President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial in disarray.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi insisted Thursday that Senate Republicans must provide details on witnesses and testimony before she would send over the charges for President Trump’s trial. No deal, replied Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell after meeting with his Senate Democratic counterpart.

“We remain at an impasse,” he said.

As darkness fell and lawmakers prepared to depart for the year, McConnell wondered from the Senate floor why in the world the Republicans should give ground to persuade House Democrats “to send us something we do not want.”



WASHINGTON, DC - FEBRUARY 6: The U.S. Capitol is seen February 6, 2017 in Washington, DC. The Senate is expected to vote on the confirmation of Betsy DeVos to become the next Education Secretary today. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

McConnell and the Democrats' Senate leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, met for about 20 minutes in their first attempt to negotiate the contours of an agreement on running the rare Senate impeachment trial that was expected to start in January.

McConnell favors a swift trial, without the new witnesses Democrats want, and he holds a clear tactical advantage if he can keep his 53-member Senate majority united. Schumer, who also met privately with Pelosi, has to bet that GOP senators won't hold the line and Republicans will peel away as public pressure mounts for a fuller trial.

For the record, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said he had met with President Trump and "he is demanding his day in court."

McConnell, who has drawn criticism for saying he won't be an impartial juror, said the Democrats were "too afraid" to send the charges to the Senate, where President Trump would be expected to be acquitted by the Republican majority.

We'll see, he said, "whether the House Democrats ever work up the courage to take their accusations to trial."

Pelosi said that McConnell "says it's OK for the foreman of the jury to be in cahoots with the lawyers of the accused. That doesn't sound right to us."

Dismissing the idea that Democrats would hold off the proceeding indefinitely to prevent President Trump from being acquitted, Schumer said there will almost certainly be a trial.

"There's an obligation under the Constitution to have a trial," Schumer told The Associated Press.

He noted that even the Democratic senators campaigning for the party's presidential nomination, with early state voting starting in February, are prepared to return to Washington to sit for the days-long proceedings. "The Constitution

requires it," he said.

Wednesday night's House vote, almost entirely along party lines, made the president just the third in U.S. history to be impeached. The House impeached President Trump on two charges — abusing his presidential power and obstructing Congress — stemming from his pressure on Ukraine to announce investigations of his political rival as President Trump withheld U.S. aid.

Pelosi's procedural delay in taking the next step — apparently in search of leverage with Senate Republicans in locking in trial arrangements — threw a wrench into the expected timing.

"So far we haven't seen anything that looks fair to us," she had said Wednesday night. On Thursday at the Capitol, she said, "We'd like to see a fair process, but we'll see what they have and will be ready for whatever it is."

President Trump mocked on Twitter: "Now the Do Nothing Party want to Do Nothing with the Articles."

Both parties said public opinion was with them after the House impeachment vote.

President Trump claimed polling showed him leading all potential Democratic opponents for next fall's election.

Pelosi said, "We've been hearing from people all over the country. Seems like people have a spring in their step because the president was held accountable for his reckless behavior."

With elections in mind, President Trump welcomed Democratic Rep. Jeff Van Drew into the GOP after the New Jersey freshman said he would be changing parties because he opposed impeachment.

Pelosi, pressed about next steps for impeachment, wouldn't say. She and her Democrats are insisting on more witnesses, testimony and documents than

McConnell appears willing to provide before they name the House “managers” who would prosecute President Trump in the Senate.

“The next thing will be when we see the process that is set forth in the Senate,” Pelosi said. “Then we’ll know the number of managers we may have to go forward and who we would choose.”

Not yet.

On the Senate floor, McConnell described the House actions against President Trump as “the most rushed, least thorough and most unfair impeachment inquiry in modern history.”

Fighting back using McConnell’s own words, Schumer said the Republican leader was plotting the “most rushed, least thorough and most unfair” impeachment trial in history by declining to agree to call witnesses, including former President Trump national security adviser John Bolton, who declined to testify before the House.

“McConnell claimed the impeachment was motivated by partisan rage,” said Schumer. “This from the man who said proudly, ‘I am not impartial.’

“What hypocrisy.”

RELATED STORIES

President Trump impeached by US House on charges of abuse of power, obstruction of Congress

House Speaker Pelosi demands impeachment trial info before sending charges to Senate

After impeachment, House bestows big trade victory on President Trump

Sen. Mitch McConnell blasts House impeachment, pledges Senate stability

POLITICS

POLITICS

**Pelosi names Schiff,
Nadler as prosecutors for
President Trump trial**

**Congressman:
Impeachment articles
won't go to Senate until
GOP promises fair trial**

POLITICS

POLITICS

**House Speaker Nancy
Pelosi says she will
'soon' transmit
impeachment to Senate**

**House votes Wednesday
to send impeachment
articles to Senate**

POLITICS

**Sen. Mitch McConnell
blasts House**

