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POLITICS

House Votes to Impeach President Trump

Democrats and Republicans vote almost entirely along party lines; president denounces effort to remove him from office

By Siobhan Hughes and Natalie Andrews

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WASHINGTON—The House impeached President Trump in a momentous set of votes late Wednesday, making him the third president since America’s founding to face a Senate trial, and laying bare the deep partisan divisions on Capitol Hill and across the country.

Nearly all Democrats, led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.), supported abuse-of-power and obstruction-of-Congress charges against Mr. Trump in the wake of his pressing Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading 2020 Democratic presidential candidate.

The chamber’s Republicans rejected both articles, saying Democrats failed to show that Mr. Trump had committed a crime and that they had managed a flawed process.

The votes followed a day of debate over Mr. Trump on the House floor. Mr. Trump tweeted and retweeted dozens of messages defending himself starting in the early morning, and commented on the vote in the evening as he addressed supporters at a rally in Battle Creek, Mich.

“They’re the ones that should be impeached,” Mr. Trump said of Democrats, moments after the second article of impeachment was approved. “House Democrats are trying to nullify the ballots of tens of millions of patriotic Americans,” he said.

The vote on the first article was 230 in favor and 197 against, almost entirely along party lines, with one lawmaker, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D., Hawaii), voting present. The tally on the second article was 229 to 198, with Ms. Gabbard again voting present.

Two Democrats crossed party lines on both votes: Reps. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey and Collin Peterson of Minnesota. Another Democrat, Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, backed the first article but opposed the second. All three lawmakers represent districts carried by Mr. Trump in the 2016 election.

The matter moves next to the Senate for a trial, where a two-thirds vote would be required to remove Mr. Trump from office. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) has said he

sees no scenarios in which Mr. Trump would be convicted.

Earlier this week, Mr. McConnell rejected a request from Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) to hear from four witnesses—including former national security adviser John Bolton—who had been called by the House, but were directed by Mr. Trump not to testify.

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eachment resolution alleged that Mr. Trump pressured Ukraine's president this summer to announce investigations that would benefit Mr. Trump politically, including by making \$391 million in U.S. security aid against Russian aggression contingent on Kyiv going public with investigations. After Mr. Trump's actions came to light, the resolution charges, he released the aid, but then obstructed the congressional probe into the matter.

House Democrats cast their action as a solemn constitutional responsibility and said they needed to remove Mr. Trump now before he could undermine the 2020 election by soliciting foreign interference.

"Our founders' vision of a republic is under threat from actions from the White House," Mrs. Pelosi said ahead of the vote. "It is tragic that the president's reckless actions make impeachment necessary. He gave us no choice."

Mrs. Pelosi announced the official impeachment effort in late September as details about Mr. Trump's actions regarding Ukraine were reported. She had resisted earlier Democratic calls to impeach Mr. Trump, amid political risks for party members in competitive districts and the near certainty that the GOP-controlled Senate wouldn't vote to convict.



The Senate Prepares for a Trial



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Polls continue to show the nation divided down the middle on impeachment: A Wall Street Journal/NBC News survey released Wednesday found Americans split 48% to 48% on whether to remove Mr. Trump from office. Some 90% of Republicans oppose impeaching Mr. Trump and removing him from office, while 83% of Democrats favor it.

Republicans say impeachment is driven by Democrats' animosity toward Mr. Trump, not by the facts of the case, and that removing him has been their goal since he took office.

“This was an impeachment in search of a crime, and they never found one,” argued House Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R., La.). Impeachment “cannot be based on a vendetta against the president the majority has pursued since the day he was elected,” said Rep. Tom Cole (R., Okla.).

As the vote drew near, Mr. Scalise accused Democrats of hating Trump voters. Democrats booed.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D., Md.) said Democrats aren’t impeaching Mr. Trump because they are bitter about an election. “We did not wish for it,” he said of impeachment, drawing Republican jeers. “We did not want it. However, the conduct of President Trump has forced our constitutional republic to protect itself.”

Chief Justice John Roberts would preside at the Senate trial, which is expected to begin in January. Republicans control the Senate 53-47, giving them the upper hand in determining the format of the proceedings, but Democrats are hopeful that they may be able to persuade some Republicans to side with them on requesting testimony.

“Our Republican colleagues will have to make a decision—do they want the truth to come out or do they want to be part of a coverup?” Mr. Schumer said in an interview.

At a news conference after the votes, Mrs. Pelosi raised the prospect of delaying sending the articles of impeachment to the Senate until Republicans there set trial rules that she considered fair. She also said she would hold off on naming impeachment managers, who would act as prosecutors, until she sees how the Senate planned to conduct its trial.

“It’s difficult to determine who the managers would be until we see the arena in which we will be participating,” Mrs. Pelosi said. “So far we haven’t seen anything that looks fair to us.”

Some Democratic lawmakers have approached leadership about a delay in sending the articles to the Senate, according to a Democratic aide. A person familiar with the proposal said it aimed to put leverage on the Senate to make concessions that Democrats want, such as witnesses in a trial.

Sending the articles automatically triggers a trial. There have been discussions on waiting until after the government is funded, according to the aide, and possibly until after the passage of a new North American trade deal.

Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas) said he doesn’t see how holding onto the articles of impeachment would give Mrs. Pelosi leverage. “We don’t care whether they never come,” he told reporters, holding his hand up to his head shaped like a gun. “It’s kind of like, don’t make me do this.”

Mr. Trump has rejected the charges of wrongdoing for months, saying a controversial July call with Ukraine’s president about aid and investigations was perfect and revealed no wrongdoing, contrary to what Democrats have alleged. In that call, in addition to asking for an investigation

of Mr. Biden and his son, Mr. Trump sought a probe into a theory that Kyiv interfered in the 2016 U.S. election.



President Trump left the White House for a campaign rally in Battle Creek, Mich., late Wednesday afternoon as the House debated his impeachment. PHOTO: ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

A bipartisan Senate investigation found no evidence of a systematic effort by Ukraine to interfere, and U.S. intelligence agencies unanimously concluded in early 2017 that Russia intervened in the 2016 election.

In a raw and personal letter to Mrs. Pelosi on the eve of the vote, Mr. Trump painted himself a victim of liberals’ “Trump Derangement Syndrome” and accused the Democrats of attempting a coup.

At the Battle Creek rally, Mr. Trump celebrated the Republican unity in opposing the measures. “We didn’t lose one Republican vote,” Mr. Trump said to cheers. “And three Democrats voted for us.”

By focusing on Ukraine, Democrats pursued charges that were narrower than some in their caucus had hoped, leaving unaddressed instances of possible obstruction of justice detailed by special counsel Robert Mueller in a probe into whether the Trump campaign conspired with Russia during the 2016 election. The narrowness of the case and compressed time for debate was in large part a political calculation, driven by a desire to keep in the fold Democrats from competitive districts.

Earlier this year, Mr. Mueller said his investigation didn’t establish a conspiracy between the Trump campaign and Russia to interfere in the 2016 U.S. election. In his report, he said he decided not to reach a decision on whether Mr. Trump obstructed justice, guided by a Justice Department policy against indicting sitting presidents, but said he didn’t believe the evidence exonerated Mr. Trump.

Wednesday marked only the third time that the full House had convened to debate and vote on the impeachment of a president, and it offered a measure of the current partisanship of American politics. During the House impeachment vote on President Clinton in 1998, both

Democrats and Republicans crossed party lines on the articles he faced, with two articles passing and two failing.

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Ahead of his own impeachment vote, Mr. Clinton had apologized for “all I have done wrong in words and deeds.”

This time, Democrats and Republicans lined up almost entirely along party lines. Mr. Trump has demanded complete loyalty and seeks to

be vindicated, not merely acquitted, and Republicans who have expressed doubts about his actions have often retired or left the party. Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan left the Republican Party earlier this year after saying that Mr. Trump should be impeached. He voted to support both counts of impeachment Wednesday.

Similarly, the Democrats' liberal base has long been demanding the removal of Mr. Trump, and impeachment quickly became the party line this fall. Among the 31 Democratic lawmakers in districts that Mr. Trump won in the 2016 presidential race—seen as the most likely to buck leadership—almost all backed impeachment.

The only two other presidents to be impeached— Andrew Johnson and Mr. Clinton—were acquitted in the Senate. Richard Nixon resigned ahead of his expected impeachment. In Mr. Clinton's Senate trial, all 45 Democrats were joined by several Republicans in voting not guilty on the two counts.

The closest parallel to the impeachment of Mr. Trump may be to that of Mr. Johnson in 1868, said Steven Smith, a political science professor at Washington University in St. Louis. Then, a Republican Congress was broadly frustrated with Mr. Johnson for failing to adhere to Reconstruction policies, but ended up impeaching him largely over the narrow issue of attempting to fire the War secretary in violation of the Tenure of Office Act.

Now, Democrats are broadly frustrated with Mr. Trump, but are impeaching him on the narrower issue of his dealings with Ukraine.

—Alex Leary and Michael C. Bender contributed to this article.

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Republican Rep. Tom Cole speaks as the House of Representatives debates the articles of impeachment against Mr. Trump.
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