

Democrats, White House position themselves for impeachment vote

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The House Judiciary Committee will begin work on articles of impeachment against President Trump with a hearing Monday morning, in what is expected to culminate in a formal vote on articles of impeachment before the end of the week.

In a schedule apparently already approved by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other top Democrats, the full House would vote on the articles of impeachment before its scheduled holiday recess that begins December 20, setting the stage for a Senate trial of the president sometime in January.

Judiciary Committee Chair Jerrold Nadler appeared on several Sunday network television talk shows to outline the Democratic case against Trump and indicate that his committee would take action this week.

The Democratic staff of the committee issued a 52-page report Saturday purporting to lay out the constitutional basis for impeaching Trump. The president's name appears only infrequently in the text, much of which is devoted to a pretentious and turgid review of the historical background to the inclusion of the power of impeachment in the US Constitution.

The purpose of this exercise is to suggest that Trump's conduct in pressuring Volodymyr Zelensky, the president of Ukraine, to announce the opening of an investigation into Hunter Biden, son of former Vice President Joe Biden, one of Trump's main challengers in the 2020 presidential election, represents a unique confluence of wrongdoing on the part of the president, combining all the dangers against which the drafters of the Constitution were seeking to protect the new republic.

One key paragraph can serve as a sample. It reads, in part:

"... the Framers principally intended impeachment for three forms of Presidential wrongdoing: serious abuse

of power, betrayal of the national interest through foreign entanglements, and corruption of office and elections. When the President engages in such misconduct, and does so in ways that are recognizably wrong and injurious to our political system, impeachment is warranted."

The *World Socialist Web Site* has already pointed out the absurdity of equating the newly founded American republic at the end of the eighteenth century, surrounded by powerful empires, and the United States of 2019, the most powerful imperialist power on the planet, an empire in all but name.

The United States is not the victim of massive Russian interference in its elections, as per the maliciously false presentation by the American media, the congressional Democrats, the intelligence agencies and the report of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. Even by these accounts, the total value of all the pro-Trump and anti-Clinton materials issued from Russian sources in 2016 came to barely \$70,000, truly a drop in the bucket in a \$5 billion election campaign!

More importantly, the scale of the alleged Russian intervention is infinitesimal compared to the resources the US State Department, CIA and Pentagon routinely employ to discredit, subvert and overthrow targeted governments overseas. In Ukraine, for example, Washington expended \$5 billion to engineer the 2014 "Maidan revolution" spearheaded by ultra-right and neo-Nazi forces against an elected president deemed too close to Russia. Another \$5 billion has been expended since 2014 to prop up the regime installed in power by that political coup, including the \$391 million in military aid whose dispatch was delayed by Trump in order to pressure the Ukraine government to do his bidding against the Bidens.

This reality does not stop the Democrats from

suggesting that Trump is guilty, not only of putting his personal political advantage above a longstanding imperialist foreign policy initiative—the real reason for the CIA “whistleblower” complaint that touched off impeachment—but of actual treason.

The committee report cited above includes a lengthy discussion of the constitutional provision for impeachment as the penalty for a president guilty of “treason, bribery or high crimes and misdemeanors,” including references to Benedict Arnold, who betrayed the American Revolution.

Nadler echoed this allegation in the course of his appearances Sunday on network television, repeatedly suggesting that Trump had engaged in a pattern of collaboration with Russia, first in the 2016 election campaign and now in the run-up to the 2020 campaign. He was following the example of Speaker Pelosi, who reiterated in her Thursday press conference that with Trump, “all roads lead to Putin.”

The House Judiciary Committee will hold its second full hearing on impeachment Monday, taking testimony from the Democratic counsel for the House Intelligence Committee, Daniel Goldman, based on the 300-page report prepared by the committee’s Democratic majority on Trump’s actions in relation to Ukraine. The Republican counsel will also testify in support of the minority report produced by the Republicans on the Intelligence Committee.

The Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on two or possibly three articles of impeachment: one on the withholding of aid to Ukraine and one on Trump’s obstruction of Congress in refusing to provide documents or witnesses subpoenaed by the House, with a possible third count of obstruction of justice if the Democrats decide to incorporate the Mueller report into the impeachment case.

The Republican response to the impending impeachment vote has been a combination of defiance and distraction. The White House sent a two-paragraph letter to the Judiciary Committee Friday in which White House Counsel Pat Cipollone denounced the impeachment proceeding as an “abuse of power”—extraordinary language for an action begun by Congress against three previous presidents—and declaring that Trump would reserve any defense for his Senate trial, declining to participate in any way in the House proceedings.

House Republicans meanwhile sent a letter to Nadler demanding that he call eight additional witnesses, including both Hunter and Joe Biden, in an effort to accomplish through the impeachment proceeding itself what Trump had already begun in pressuring the government of Ukraine—intensifying the attack on a potential Democratic rival in 2020. They also are seeking the testimony of the CIA “whistleblower” and of Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the Intelligence Committee. Nadler is certain to reject this demand, but all these witnesses could well be called to testify in a Senate trial, where the Republican majority in the Senate will set the rules.

Former Vice President Biden told reporters last week that he would not appear at the Senate trial unless subpoenaed, which would require a vote by 51 senators. “The president is the one who has committed impeachable crimes, and I’m not going to let him divert from that,” he said.

Biden has come under mounting pressure in the course of his presidential campaign to account for his son’s taking a lucrative \$50,000-a-month position on the board of the Ukrainian gas company Burisma, engaging in a much publicized shouting match with one Iowa farmer who raised the issue with him directly.

Three Senate Republicans, Lindsey Graham, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Finance Committee, and Ron Johnson, chairman of the Homeland Security committee, have requested government documents relating to the Bidens’ actions in Ukraine. Biden was the point man for the Obama administration in Ukraine during the period his son took the position of the board of Burisma.



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