

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

### **Senate Rejects Witnesses in Trump Impeachment Trial**

*Republican majority, by a 51-49 vote, keeps new evidence from being introduced.*

Source: WallStreetJournal.com, January 31, 2020

Senate Republicans rejected Democrats' demands to call new witnesses and documents in President Trump's impeachment trial, clearing the way for an acquittal on abuse of power and obstruction-of-Congress charges next week.

The 51-49 vote late Friday afternoon represented a major victory for Republican leadership, which has sought to complete the trial as quickly as possible and avoid testimony that could be politically damaging. Democrats had spent weeks calling for the Senate to subpoena former national security adviser John Bolton and other officials, seeking testimony about Mr. Trump's efforts to press Ukraine to launch investigations that could benefit him politically.

Two Republicans, Sens. Mitt Romney of Utah and Susan Collins of Maine, joined every Democrat to vote for the Senate to call in new witnesses. The GOP controls 53 of the Senate's 100 seats.

Under a separate resolution that Republicans approved along party lines, the impeachment trial will break for the weekend and resume Monday at 11 a.m. EST for four hours of closing arguments. After those arguments, the trial will adjourn again, giving senators the opportunity to speak on the floor about the charges before returning for a vote on the articles of impeachment at 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

Democrats shortly after the vote on witnesses suggested that any acquittal of Mr. Trump would be tainted.

"America will remember this day, unfortunately, where the Senate did not live up to the responsibilities, where the Senate turned away from truth and went along with a sham trial," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) told reporters. Democrats also offered a series of amendments to the rules again calling for evidence, and each failed.

Democratic hopes to extend the trial were dashed in the final 24 hours before the vote, when two Republicans who were on the fence about new evidence said they would oppose the motion. Late Thursday, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.) said he believed the president acted improperly but that his actions didn't rise to impeachable conduct. And on Friday, Alaska Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski said she didn't "believe the continuation of this process will change anything."

The two announcements sealed the motion's fate. The delay until next week will place Mr. Trump's fate in an unusual procedural purgatory. While he is all but certain to be cleared of impeachable offenses in the Republican-controlled Senate, he may have to wait days before an official acquittal, during a hectic time in U.S. politics.

Voters in Iowa will caucus on Monday in the first contest of the 2020 Democratic presidential primary, in which several members of the Senate are competing, and Mr. Trump is set to give his State of the Union address on Tuesday.

Republicans said holding the vote on Wednesday was the easiest way to reach the preordained conclusion without a time-consuming procedural battle with Democrats.

"The outcome is certain but the pain and suffering are optional. We decided to eliminate as much of the optional pain and suffering as possible," said Sen. Roy Blunt (R., Mo.).

"It's a fait accompli," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) said. "We know how it's going to turn out."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) called the president before he introduced the resolution setting the vote for Wednesday, said a person familiar with the matter, and Mr. Trump signed off on it.

One idea floated at a closed-door GOP meeting late Friday was that if the final impeachment vote is delayed until Wednesday, Mr. Trump could request to move the date of his State of the Union until

after that vote, two people familiar with the matter said. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) would need to formally extend an invitation for a new date.

While a simple majority was necessary to consider more evidence, two-thirds of the Senate would be needed to vote to convict Mr. Trump for him to be removed from office.

The question of bringing in new evidence was at the heart of the nine days of arguments and questioning, pitting Democrats—who want to acquire additional material to bolster their case—against Republicans who have sought to quickly vote to acquit Mr. Trump.

In their final arguments on Friday, Democrats warned that moving forward with the trial without considering additional evidence could set a dangerous precedent for future attempts at Congressional investigations into the executive branch.

“This will set a new precedent, this will be cited in impeachment trials from this point until the end of history,” said Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.), the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee who served as the lead impeachment manager. “If the Senate allows President Trump’s obstruction to stand, it effectively nullifies the impeachment power. It will allow future presidents to decide whether they want their misconduct to be investigated or not.”

Republicans and White House lawyers sharply criticized Democratic demands for evidence in the Senate trial, arguing that House Democrats should have collected material when they were conducting the investigation in their chamber. Deputy White House counsel Patrick Philbin warned that the Senate should not “prolong matters further by trying to redo work that the House failed to do.”

Democrats pointed out that House committees issued 71 categories of document requests or subpoenas last year to the White House and other parts of the executive branch but that the White House blocked all of the requests.

Revelations last Sunday about Mr. Bolton’s unpublished book fueled efforts to open the trial to additional evidence. In leaked manuscript, Mr. Bolton wrote that Mr. Trump told him he was freezing security aid to Ukraine until it opened investigations into former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading Democratic presidential candidate, and other matters. Mr. Bolton had said he would testify if subpoenaed by the Senate.

The charge that Mr. Trump linked the hold on roughly \$400 million in security aid this summer to opening investigations was at the center of the House impeachment inquiry. Mr. Trump has denied that the two were related, saying he held the aid to both investigate corruption in Ukraine and ensure other countries were contributing to its defense; he has called the impeachment case against him a partisan attack. The aid was released in September amid bipartisan complaints from Congress.

Mr. Trump and his allies have argued that it was corrupt for Mr. Biden during the Obama administration to seek the ouster of a Ukrainian prosecutor who had once investigated a Ukrainian gas company where Mr. Biden’s son Hunter sat on the board. Mr. Biden sought the prosecutor’s removal as part of a broad international effort to combat corruption in Ukraine. The Bidens have denied any wrongdoing. Hunter Biden has said it was poor judgment on his part to serve on the Burisma board, which paid him \$50,000 a month, while his father was involved with Ukraine policy as vice president.

Testimony from Mr. Bolton is one piece of evidence Democrats have demanded in the Senate trial. They have also sought a trove of documents from the administration and the testimony of several other top administration officials, including acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney.

While the first article of impeachment accuses Mr. Trump of abusing his power when he requested the investigations, the second charges him of obstructing Congress when the administration didn’t turn over material to the House impeachment inquiry.

### **Possible Response Questions:**

- What are your thoughts about the Senate’s vote? Explain.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.