

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

Democrats Set Rapid Timetable for Trump Impeachment Probe

Source: Siobhan Hughes and Andrew Duehren, *The Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 2019

WASHINGTON—House Democrats have settled on a narrow impeachment inquiry into President Trump centered on his campaign to enlist Ukraine to hurt a political rival, a rapid strategy that will produce hearings within a few weeks and build to a possible vote by November. That plan was put into action immediately on Friday, when a trio of House committees issued a subpoena to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for records of interactions between the president and his lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and the Ukrainian government.

The Intelligence, Oversight and Foreign Affairs committees, which had requested the material about three weeks ago, also scheduled depositions starting next week with five State Department officials, including Kurt Volker, who late Friday resigned as the special envoy for Ukraine, according to a person familiar with the matter, after playing a role in arranging a meeting between Mr. Trump’s personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, and an aide to Ukraine’s president.

Mr. Volker in July introduced Mr. Giuliani to a top aide to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Andriy Yermak. The State Department, which has confirmed Mr. Volker introduced Mr. Giuliani to Mr. Yermak but has said Mr. Giuliani was acting in his capacity as a private citizen, didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The Democrats’ approach to the impeachment inquiry involves several committees but puts control into the hands of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D., Calif.) and the Intelligence Committee—one of the only panels for which she has handpicked the Democratic members. Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D., Calif.) said Friday that members of his committee would work through the next two weeks, while Congress is officially in recess, and he is planning hearings as soon as next week.

“We’re going to be trying to schedule hearings, witness interviews, subpoenas and document requests. We’ll be busy,” Mr. Schiff said. The fast action—and discussions about resorting to a little-known congressional power to detain, arrest or fine recalcitrant witnesses—suggests the House could vote on articles of impeachment as soon as late October. The Judiciary Committee, which is traditionally the epicenter of impeachment proceedings, would draft the articles.

The Judiciary panel has been investigating a broader array of behavior by Mr. Trump, including issues raised by former special counsel Robert Mueller’s report. But Judiciary members haven’t publicly complained about the arrangement that now puts the Intelligence Committee in the driver’s seat, with a tighter focus.

“There is a dictate that momentum will not slow,” said Rep. Jim Himes (D., Conn.), the No. 2 Democrat on the Intelligence committee. “We are determined that momentum will not slow just because members aren’t in town.”

It isn’t yet clear exactly what charge or charges the House might level at the president in its inquiry, which Mrs. Pelosi announced this past week. Some key Democrats have suggested Mr. Trump was guilty of a “corrupt abuse of power”—potential grounds for impeachment—when he repeatedly pressed Mr. Zelensky in a July phone call to work with his lawyer, Mr. Giuliani, and Attorney General William Barr on investigations of former Vice President Joe Biden and his son. That conversation came just after Mr. Trump had held up nearly \$400 million in aid to Ukraine, fueling criticism that suspending the aid was another way the president used U.S. foreign policy for personal political gain.

A whistleblower complaint released this week, based on information from multiple U.S. officials, alleges that White House officials worked to conceal evidence of the president’s actions. Mr. Trump has repeatedly described his call with the Ukrainian president as “perfect” and dismissed the investigation on Twitter as a “Democrat Scam.” His Republican allies have made the case that a rough transcript of the call released by the White House shows no explicit demand for a probe in return for the aid.

In a significant escalation of the political messaging around the controversy, Mr. Trump’s campaign said Friday it was spending \$10 million along with the Republican National Committee on a TV ad highlighting Mr. Biden’s past efforts in Ukraine and Democrats’ push for impeachment proceedings. “They lost the election, now they want to steal this one,” a narrator says. The ad, to be shown on national cable outlets and online,

details the former vice president's past work in Ukraine but leaves out context about broader efforts by the U.S. and other governments to curb corruption there.

A Ukrainian official earlier this year said he had no evidence of wrongdoing by Mr. Biden or his son Hunter in that country.

Separately, two House committees said Friday they are probing why the White House delayed the disbursement of aid to Ukraine, sending a letter to the White House budget office requesting written answers and documents about the decision-making process.

The committee leaders—Appropriations Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D., N.Y.) and Budget Chairman John Yarmuth (D., Ky.)—are alleging that the Office of Management and Budget gave responsibility for allocating the funds to the office's associate director for national-security programs, which they write was a “seemingly unprecedented step of delegating the authority to execute these apportionments to a political appointee.” They requested documents justifying that decision. The White House didn't respond to a request for comment.

The inspector general for the Pentagon is also considering a request that it open a review of U.S. military aid to Ukraine. The request was made in a letter from Sen. Dick Durbin (D., Ill.).

In the subpoena to Mr. Pompeo, the committees said multiple State Department officials had knowledge of the subject of their impeachment probe and that new revelations raised “troubling questions about State Department officials' possible involvement in the President's efforts to press Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 U.S. election.” They said Mr. Pompeo's failure to share documents impaired the ability of Congress to protect the country's national security and the integrity of its democracy.

The State Department didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

For much of this year, Democrats' debate on whether to pursue impeachment of Mr. Trump centered on Mr. Mueller's probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election. But since Mr. Mueller didn't accuse Mr. Trump of wrongdoing, the president has become more emboldened, two administration officials said. On Friday, Mr. Trump called for Mr. Schiff to resign, saying that in a hearing the previous day the Intelligence Committee chairman had “fraudulently read to Congress” a version of the Ukraine phone call.

Mr. Schiff during the hearing presented a mock dialogue of the Trump-Zelensky call, which he characterized as an “organized crime shakedown.”

As the Intelligence panel's Democrats canceled planned events back home, they began identifying people from whom they would like to hear, with particular interest in Messrs. Giuliani and Barr. Democrats also would like to hear from the White House officials who were on the July call.

The Intelligence Committee will receive a closed-door briefing next Friday from Intelligence Community Inspector General Michael Atkinson, who helped spark the impeachment proceeding when he alerted Mr. Schiff to the whistleblower complaint, which he deemed an urgent concern but said he had been blocked from sharing.

One reason that Democrats believe they will be able to act quickly is that Mr. Trump hasn't been silent about the matter. Last weekend, Mr. Trump acknowledged he had brought up his potential rival, Mr. Biden, in the phone call, and the White House later released the rough transcript.

“I don't think we need to go interview a thousand witnesses when he's copped to it,” said Rep. Eric Swalwell (D., Calif.), who serves on both the Intelligence and Judiciary Committees.

It appears unlikely that the probe will be bipartisan. The panel's top Republican, Rep. Devin Nunes of California, has echoed Mr. Trump in saying that Democrats are engaged in a witch hunt. Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee have relentlessly pressed Mrs. Pelosi over breaking with House precedent by skipping a House-wide vote to authorize an impeachment inquiry. The maneuver, they have said, reflects a partisan process that is unworthy of the sober nature of the probe.

Still, at least some Republicans are refraining from criticizing the investigation before it has begun. “It's important to talk to people with direct knowledge to get to the bottom of it,” said Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York. She also declined to give a pass to White House officials who, according to the whistleblower complaint, had diverted politically sensitive records of Mr. Trump's call with Mr. Zelensky into a computer system reserved for classified materials. “They're going to have to answer questions.”

Possible Response Questions:

- What are your thoughts on the impeachment probe? Explain.
- Pick a word/line/passag e from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.