

WHAT'S NEXT FOR PRESIDENT?

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Donald Trump became the third President in American history to be impeached on Wednesday night when a majority of Representatives voted in favour of the two articles of impeachment drawn up by House Democrats. The articles, essentially the charges against the President, accuse Mr. Trump of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, both related to the Ukraine scandal.

How the House voted?

It was certain before the vote that the impeachment resolution would go through the House of Representatives, which is controlled by the Democrats. In the 435-member House, the Democrats have 233 members, while the Republicans have 197. The House voted on the impeachment articles largely along the party lines. The first article got 230 votes. The tally on the second article was 229-198. Two Democrats — Reps. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey and Collin Peterson of Minnesota, both from districts that backed Mr. Trump in the 2016 presidential election — voted against both articles. Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, whose district was also carried by Mr. Trump in 2016, voted for the first article but against the second. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D) of Hawaii voted to “present” on both votes.

On what charges?

Both articles of impeachment are related to the Ukraine scandal, which means the democrats did not consider the Robert Mueller report on Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 election and Mr. Trump's handling of the issue for the impeachment. The first article, on abuse of power, is about Mr. Trump's conduct in the Ukraine scandal. The Democrats allege that the President abused his power by putting pressure on Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky to launch a probe against Joe Biden, the former Vice-President and a Democratic presidential candidate for the 2020 presidential election, and his son Hunter Biden. The President is accused of withholding both a White House meeting and military aid to Ukraine. The article states Mr. Trump “corruptly solicited the government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations” into Mr. Biden and into “a discredited theory” that Ukraine interfered with the 2016 presidential election.

The second article, on obstruction of Congress, alleges that Mr. Trump obstructed the Congressional impeachment inquiry by refusing to cooperate with it. The President, who has denied all charges, urged several witnesses not to testify before the House panel and asked the White House and other departments not to comply with House subpoenas. President Trump “has directed the unprecedented, categorical and indiscriminate defiance of subpoenas,” states Article II.

Is Trump out of office?

No. Impeachment by the House doesn't remove an American President from office immediately. Impeachment means a majority of House Representatives have approved the articles raised against the President, setting the stage for his trial in the Senate. After the trial, the Senators will vote on his conviction. A President can be convicted and removed from office with support of at least two-thirds of Senators (that is 67 in the 100-member U.S. Senate). In the current Senate, the Republicans have a majority with 53 seats, while the Democrats have 47 (including two

independents). This means for Mr. Trump to be convicted, the Democrats have to make sure that none of their Senators crosses the party line and at least 20 Republicans do that and vote for the conviction — an impossibility given the partisan mood in the Capitol. So far, the Republicans have rejected the charges against the President. So it's almost certain that Mr. Trump will be acquitted in the Senate.

Then why impeachment?

Democrats say it is their constitutional duty to start the impeachment proceedings as the President's actions threaten the Constitution. The underlying message is that as next election is less than a year away, the voters can decide whether they want to re-elect a President who's impeached by the House. It's also about bad legacy for Mr. Trump. He's gone down in history as the third President to be impeached in the U.S. But it is not clear how the impeachment would impact the 2020 election. A *Wall Street Journal / NBC News* survey, released on Wednesday, suggests that Americans are split 48-48% on whether to sack Mr. Trump from office. Some 90% of Republicans oppose the impeachment, while 83% of Democrats support it.

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