

Trump impeachment trial begins with bitter dispute over rules

The Senate impeachment trial of President Trump resumed Tuesday afternoon with Democrats and Republicans warring over the rules and Trump touting the U.S. economic boom several time zones away.

TRUMP SENATE IMPEACHMENT LIVE BLOG: LAWMAKERS DEBATE GROUND RULES

Sen. Chuck Schumer took to the Senate floor immediately before the proceedings began to rail against the rules proposed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to govern the trial, calling them a “national disgrace” and an attempt to conduct a trial at 2 a.m.

“The McConnell resolution will result in a rushed trial, with little evidence in the dark of night,” Schumer said.

IMPEACHMENT TRIAL RULES SEEM WRITTEN IN THE WHITE HOUSE, NOT THE SENATE, SCHUMER SAYS

But McConnell pledged a “fair impeachment trial” and said he’ll move to table or kill various motions that he thinks alters the framework.

“No one should dictate process to United States senators,” McConnell said.

Before the trial resumed, House aides were spotted wheeling over impeachment documents to the Senate side and the House managers held court complaining about a “rigged” trial. Meanwhile, Trump was meeting with world leaders at an economic forum in Davos and avoided the impeachment spectacle unfolding in Washington that will determine whether he stays in office.

Before the substance of the case could begin in earnest, Chief Justice John Roberts was administering the oath of office to Sen. Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, who was absent last week attending to a family medical issue. With all 100 senators sworn in, then the thorny issues of the rules take center stage.

McConnell says he has the votes to pass a resolution that governs the time each

side will get for the impeachment trial, while leaving the controversial issue of witnesses for consideration after the first phase of arguments.

Schumer blasted the rules for relegating the impeachment debate into the dead of night and he's proposed amendments to fix the "flaws." Democrats, which control only 47 seats, need the help of four Republicans to get changes, as well as new documents and witnesses.

Unlike in the Clinton impeachment in which the resolution passed 100-0, Democrats have fumed over McConnell's plan for putting obstacles in the path of submitting evidence and getting witnesses, for including a "kill switch" to allow for a motion for dismissal, and for forcing the opening statements to take place in the dead of night.

Like the Clinton impeachment trial, the resolution would give each side 24 hours to present their opening cases. But unlike two decades ago, the rules call for the arguments for each side to be completed over two days. With the trial set to start each day at 1 p.m., that will mean the arguments will be past many Americans' bedtimes.

"The process was good enough for President Clinton, and basic fairness dictates, it's good enough for President Trump as well," McConnell said Tuesday. "The country is watching to see if we can rise to the occasion."

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It's only the third such impeachment in U.S. history. The case centers on Trump asking the newly elected president of Ukraine for investigations into his political opponents with a White House meeting and millions in security assistance hanging in the balance. The articles of impeachment allege Trump abused the power of his office for personal gain in the 2020 election and then obstructed Congress by blocking witnesses and documents.

But the White House argues there was no crime and the process of the investigation was so partisan and flawed that the articles are "constitutionally invalid."

Fox News' Chad Pergram and Adam Shaw contributed to this report.

Watch the Senate trial live:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewWy_IWkLm0&feature=emb_logo

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