

THE EPOCH TIMES

OUR NATION

Senate Majority
Leader Mitch
McConnell (R-Ky.)

McConnell Rejects Schumer's Call for New Witnesses in Senate Trial

'The Senate is meant to act as judge and jury, to hear a trial, not to re-run the entire fact-finding investigation,' says Sen. McConnell **7**



Trump Signs Defense Policy Bill That Establishes Space Force, Addresses China Threat

EMEL AKAN

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, Md.—President Donald Trump signed a \$738 billion defense bill on Dec. 20, calling it “the largest-ever investment” in the U.S. military. The bill authorizes the creation of a Space Force and the first-ever paid family leave for federal employees. It also addresses a wide range of potential threats from China.

The legislation establishes the Space Force as a sixth branch of the military.

Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) during a ceremony at Joint Base Andrews before flying to his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, where he is expected to spend his Christmas holiday. “Today’s signing of the 2020 NDAA is a watershed event in the truest sense of the word,” Trump said.

The legislation establishes the Space Force as a sixth branch of the military, one of Trump’s top priorities for the Pentagon. “With my signature today, you will witness the birth of the Space Force,” Trump said, calling it “a big moment.” “Amid grave threats to our national security, American superiority in space is absolutely vital.” Congress approved the NDAA in a strong bipartisan vote. The bill cleared the House on Dec. 11 by a vote of 377–48; on Dec. 17, the Senate voted 86–8 to approve the legislation and send it to Trump’s desk. The NDAA sets the budget, expenditures, and policies for the Pentagon for the fiscal year 2020, which runs from Oct. 1, 2019, through Sept. 30, 2020. The bill prioritizes the modernization of the military and the expansion of its workforce. It provides \$22 billion more to the armed forces in 2020 than last year, plus another \$5.3 billion for disaster recovery. It also grants 12 weeks of paid parental leave to the federal government’s 2.1 million employees. The provision will cost \$3.3 billion from 2021 to 2024, according

Amid grave threats to our national security, American superiority in space is absolutely vital.

President Donald Trump

President Donald Trump stands with First Lady Melania Trump after signing the “National Defense Authorization Act for FY2020” at Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Dec. 20, 2019.



NICHOLAS KAM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

DHS Watchdog Probe Finds No Misconduct in Death of 2 Migrant Children

JANITA KAN

THE Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) internal watchdog found no wrongdoing by immigration officials in the death of two migrant children who died last year. The two children died last December in Border Patrol (CBP) custody after they made the dangerous trek through Mexico to cross into the United States illegally. Jakelin Maquin died Dec. 8 of sepsis caused by a bacterial infection at age 7, while 8-year-old Felipe Gómez Alonzo died on Dec. 24, also from sepsis caused by a bacteria. The department launched investigations following their deaths. In both cases, the watchdog stated that “the investigation found no misconduct or malfeasance by DHS personnel.” The children’s deaths came at a time when the United States faced an unprecedented influx of illegal immigration at the southern border that had overwhelmed border facilities, resources, and the immigration system. There were 977,509 apprehensions of people deemed inadmissible along the southwest border in fiscal year 2019, according to data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. “We are still saddened by the tragic loss of these young lives, and we continue to bolster medical screenings and care at DHS facilities on the border,” a spokeswoman for Homeland Security told the Associated Press. “The men and women of Border Patrol are committed to the highest standards of professionalism and care.”

Both children were traveling with a parent at the time of their deaths. Maquin was apprehended with her father at Antelope Wells, New Mexico, on Dec. 6, 2018. The initial screening revealed no evidence of health issues, the department said at the time. During a 90-mile bus trip to another CBP facility, the child became sick with a fever, began vomiting, and started having seizures. Upon arrival at the facility, the child was treated by medical staff, then flown to a hospital where she was pronounced dead the next day.



A group of illegal aliens who have just crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico near McAllen, Texas, on April 18, 2019.

Meanwhile, the other child was apprehended with his father near El Paso, Texas, and transported to a CBP checkpoint at Alamogordo, New Mexico, to await family placement. He started exhibiting signs of illness on Dec. 23 and was transported to the nearest hospital for evaluation and treatment. He was diagnosed with an upper respiratory infection, prescribed medicine, and discharged. The child’s condition improved briefly then spiraled downward. He was then transported to a hospital where he became unresponsive and died. The number of border crossings into the

United States from Mexico has declined in recent months as a result of some Trump administration policies, such as the expansion of the Migrant Protection Protocols. Last week, the Trump administration announced another push to control the number of asylum applications by expanding the number of crimes that would disqualify an immigrant from seeking asylum, in a proposed rule.

The Department of Homeland Security’s internal watchdog stated that ‘the investigation found no misconduct or malfeasance by DHS personnel.’

The proposal, announced by the Department of Justice and the DHS on Dec. 18, aims to help “devote more resources to the adjudication of asylum cases filed by non-criminal aliens.” It also appears to be the administration’s attempt to address a backlog of active cases that are currently being processed in the system. The proposed rule adds an extra seven categories of crimes that would make immigrants ineligible from receiving protection in the United States. Some of the crimes include a felony under federal or state law, alien smuggling, illegal re-entry, and other misdemeanors. The proposal will still need to go through a public commenting period—which will end on Jan. 21, 2020—before it can be implemented.

Billionaires Warn of Stock Market Dip if Democrat Beats Trump in 2020, Expert Agrees

Market strategist Kevin Muir unpacks the predictions, explains the reasoning

TOM OZIMEK

A handful of billionaire investors worry that a successful Democrat bid for the White House in 2020 would spark a stock market meltdown, with some saying by as much as 40 percent. Ray Dalio (worth \$18.7 billion), Paul Tudor Jones (worth \$5.1 billion), and Stanley Druckenmiller (worth \$4.7 billion) are just a few of the market-movers fretting about stock indices falling should a Democrat end up in the Oval Office, particularly if it’s one of the far-left candidates. Dalio estimated a drop of around 22 percent, Jones predicted 26 percent, while Druckenmiller said that a victory by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) would pull the stock market down between 30 and 40 percent. Kevin Muir, a veteran trader and author of the MacroTourist, a macroeconomics blog popular among professional investors, crunched the numbers being thrown around by the billionaires and discussed his findings with The Epoch Times. “To some extent, the market is a discounting mechanism, and that is what would be going on behind the scenes,” Muir said, referring to a set of specific predictions that Jones made based on a model that incorporated odds from an elections market, such as PredictIt, where people bet on election results. “Attaching probabilities to it, trying to discount it, and so figure out the fair value based upon the potential outcomes of these leaders winning,” Muir said of the methodology that would have underpinned Jones’s comments when, at last month’s Greenwich Economic Forum, the billionaire made some shocking predictions about a hit to the stock market in case of a Democrat win versus a market rally if President Donald Trump is reelected. “We did this poll internally about where the S&P would trade if Elizabeth Warren became president. And then Biden, Buttigieg, Klobuchar, etc., and then we took the election probabilities,” Jones said at the forum on Nov. 1. “Our poll said that if Elizabeth Warren would become president, the S&P would trade around 2,250,” Jones added. “It’s at 3,050 now.” The hedge fund founder said his model showed that a victory by Trump would send the S&P to 3,600. Dalio, who shared the stage with Jones, echoed his perspective. “I’m just mechanistic, so I go through the calculations, and if you take away the way corporate taxes have been changed, the undoing of that, that’s worth 7 or 8 percent. If you take the changes in the GAAP accounting, so changes in the taxes, taxes for corporations, that’s worth about 15 percent of earnings and therefore, would drop it on that basis alone. If you take, then, the wealth tax, that’s \$2.8 trillion over 10 years, and that’ll have an effect.” Muir was more modest in his estimates, saying: “In terms of the specifics, I think they’re probably a little too low, 2,250 sounds extreme to me. I think it’s just billionaires sounding all worried about it.” He called Jones’s predictions “a really interesting intellectual exercise,” but cautioned against using them as “the holy grail of figuring out the fair value for the stock market.” The veteran trader said he expects that if someone such as Warren were to win, her more extreme policies would be constrained by compromise, which he said would likely be forced because of the nature of the U.S. political system. Still, he noted that many market players find her policies frightening. “A lot of the policies that she has are very scary for the market,” Muir said, “like the financial transaction tax, going after the banks.”

would signify a 26 percent drop. Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, according to Jones, would cause the S&P to dip by 11.5 percent to 2,700. Muir said that because some of Warren’s more extreme policies would likely not make it to implementation, “a 20 percent drop is a much more reasonable expectation” in the event of a Warren win. “He had them both at 2,250, but I suspect Bernie isn’t going to be quite as bad,” Muir said. “If we change the decline to a 20 percent bear market (2,454) and move Biden and Buttigieg to a 10 percent correction (2,760), we get a 3,741 balancing figure for Trump,” Muir said, discussing revisions to Jones’s Nov. 1 figures, when the S&P was at 3,050. Muir’s model gives a figure 141 points higher in case of a Trump win than Jones’s calculations. The market strategist said what may account for the difference is that he used a different election market as reference. Muir said his calculations were closer to “back-of-the-napkin voodoo” than a precise prediction, but noted that they are “illustrative of how the election might be moving markets.” “This is Paul Tudor Jones’s kind of view of the world, where he says, ‘Well, the market is already discounting the possibility of Warren and Sanders winning, and if we do have a Trump win, then the reality is that it’s been held back and it’s going to rally hugely.’” A calculation on Dec. 19, based on the model provided by Muir and assuming a 20 percent and 10 percent correction for Sanders/Warren and



Ray Dalio speaks onstage during TechCrunch Disrupt San Francisco 2019 at Moscone Convention Center, on Oct. 2, 2019.

To some extent, the market is a discounting mechanism, and that is what would be going on behind the scenes.

Kevin Muir, veteran trader

Biden/Buttigieg, respectively, would mean that a Trump win would boost to the S&P from its current 3,197 to 3,696. Using Jones’s more radical assumptions of a 26 percent and 12 percent correction for Sanders/Warren and Biden/Buttigieg, respectively, a Trump win in 2020 would put the S&P at 3,826. Muir suggested that Bloomberg, Clinton, and Yang would be stock market neutral, meaning their policies would arguably not have an appreciable impact on the index valuation.

“Little Bit of a Dip ... Then We Melt” Muir said his main reservation with respect to his model is that he isn’t that confident in the accuracy of the market as a discounting mechanism. He pointed to the fact that stocks rallied after Trump’s 2016 win, defying forecasts for a selloff, based on his campaign rhetoric of cracking down on trade imbalances. Similarly, the gloom markets expected after Bill Clinton’s 1992 victory failed to materialize as stocks soared as the tech bubble inflated. “Sometimes markets can’t look that far forward,” Muir said. “It might be something that the market has not quite caught on to enough and you might make the argument that what Tudor is assuming is priced into the market is not actually priced in yet, and therefore we need to go lower as the market increases the probability that Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren might win.” “I can see a situation where if it was



Traders work before the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange on Nov. 14, 2019.

Warren or Sanders that won, you would have a market opening that was down, almost a crash, and then we rally from there.” “And I can see a situation where the opposite occurs if it’s Biden or Buttigieg, and we have a little bit of a dip, where it doesn’t seem so bad, and then we melt for the next six months or a year.”

Mind the Moderates “I will acknowledge that the initial reaction to the far-left Democratic wins would probably be worse for the stock market, but the long-term effects would probably be worse under the moderates,” Muir said. “Short-run, everybody’s worried about Sanders and Warren,” the market strategist said. “I actually am more worried about Biden and Buttigieg because I think they’re going to try to balance the budget.” He said the two moderates would likely raise taxes and constrain spending, stunting markets buoyed by loose monetary and fiscal policies. “When economies try to cut spending and fix it with lower monetary policy, it’s proved to not work,” Muir said. “I think Europe is a perfect example of that.” Inflation in the eurozone remains stubbornly below target despite repeated doses of monetary stimulus by the European Central Bank, including quantitative easing and interest rates at or near zero. On Dec. 17, the European Commission called on eurozone governments that have fiscal space to do so, to loosen their purse strings and spend more in an effort to boost inflation and job creation. This would mainly refer to Germany and the Netherlands, which have large budget surpluses and relatively low public debt.

The commission, which is the executive body of the European Union, expects eurozone economic growth at 1.2 percent next year and in 2021, against 1.1 percent in 2019. America’s economy, by contrast, grew by nearly 3 percent last year, buoyed in part by a budget deficit of \$984 billion in fiscal year 2019. This figure is 4.6 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP). “Americans from all walks of life are flourishing again, thanks to pro-growth policies enacted by this administration,” acting Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought said in a statement accompanying the release of the figures in October. “Clearly, asset prices today, whether it’s U.S. stocks, whether it’s interest rates, whether it’s the dollar—it’s all priced off of, in my opinion, a 5 percent budget deficit with this incredibly over-stimulative fiscal policy, combined with this overly stimulative monetary policy,” Jones said. “It’s creating this U.S. exceptionalism.” Muir said. “I think this has been the problem up until now, namely that America has been the only place to be. Look at the stock market in America—it’s outperformed everyone else by a wide, wide margin.” “And I think there could be nothing better for the whole global economy than if Europe and these other countries that have been trying to fix their economies with more extreme monetary policy, put that failed policy to bed.” Jones said: “If we normalize our deficit to where Europe is right now, we’d have a completely different valuation for the stock market, valuations for the dollar. The dollar would be essentially lower, I believe. So this next presidential election and what policies they pursue after, I think this one is going to be more meaningful than any one, certainly in my lifetime.” “So as an investor, you have to have a view on the election because the outcomes are so extreme. I’ve never seen this kind of polarity in elections as we have now. And they always say, ‘It doesn’t make any difference who the president is, the markets rallied 53 percent at the time of the Democrats, 52 percent at the time [of the Republicans].’ But it does make a difference.”

Year-End Spending Deal Includes Massive Bailout for Bankrupt Mine Workers Union Pensions

MARK TAPSCOTT

W

ASHINGTON—Buried in the \$1.4 trillion bipartisan budget deal agreed on by congressional leaders and President Donald Trump is a huge taxpayer-funded bailout of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) union pension.

Critics say this is the first of many more costly rescues.

The House of Representatives earlier this year approved a measure providing bailouts for 130 severely underfunded union pension plans covered by two or more employers.

Costs of that measure were estimated to be nearly \$640 billion if it became law, and it faced mixed prospects in the Senate after the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a study saying many of the affected pension plans would never repay their bailout loans.

“CBO projects that about one-quarter of the affected pension plans would become insolvent in the 30-year loan period and would not fully repay their loans,” the congressional agency told Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) in a Sept. 7 letter.

But, as negotiators worked to avoid a government shutdown beginning Dec. 20, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), with support from West Virginia’s two senators, Democrat Joe Manchin and Republican Shelley Moore Capito, was able to slip a downsized version of the House bill into the last-minute spending deal.

Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) is the only other Senate Republican co-sponsoring the new bill. Eleven Senate Democrats are co-sponsors.

“To help these Kentucky miners and their families, Senators Capito, Manchin, and I proudly joined to introduce the Bipartisan American Miners Act, and at my request, our legislation has been included in the government funding bill that will pass Congress and head to President Trump’s desk to become law,” McConnell said in a Dec. 16 statement.

The mineworkers pension bailout also includes a provision to cover certain unfunded health care costs promised by the union. Trump is expected to sign the overall spending deal into law on Dec. 20.

Cecil Roberts, UMWA’s president, was quoted in McConnell’s statement saying, “Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s support was crucial to securing this legislation, and on behalf of America’s retired coal miners, I thank

[The McConnell bill] establishes a precedent for bailing out the hundreds of other union and non-union multi-employer pension programs that are near bankruptcy due to years of underfunding.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Capitol Hill on Dec. 17, 2019.

him for his efforts to ensure this became a reality. We will never forget it.”

The major factor in creating the current problems with underfunded multi-employer pension plans is that they were exempted years ago from the government’s requirement that single-employer private sector programs fully fund promised benefits in advance.

The exemption allowed the union plans to set aside funding for less than 100 percent of projected benefit costs. The UMWA funded only 33.3 percent of its promised benefits.

Other ailing union pension plans are in worse shape, with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union plan able to cover no more than 17.6 percent, and the New England Teamsters and Trucking Industry Pension with funds available to cover just 17.7 percent.

The problem with the McConnell bill, according to the Heritage Foundation’s Rachel Grezler, is that it establishes a precedent for bailing out the hundreds of other union and non-union multi-employer pension programs that are near bankruptcy due to years of underfunding.

“They included the bailout that just addresses the mine worker pension, so of course that’s a smaller price tag,” Grezler told The Epoch Times on Dec. 18, “but just as soon as you open the door to one bailout, can you really say no to the other 1,400 ailing plans that are out there?”

Grezler said McConnell had previously opposed a narrowly focused bailout because the problem needed to be addressed more comprehensively.

“But then, for I think political reasons, he reversed course and decided to introduce his own version of the House

bill and bring it up, and now it’s part of the [spending] package and will almost certainly go through,” she said.

Grezler said there are about 100,000 coal miners who will be helped by the McConnell measure, but that’s only about 1 percent of the pensioners covered by the rest of troubled union and private sector multi-employer retirement plans.

“There are about 11 million people with these multi-employer pension plans, they are all massively underfunded, and this is, okay, \$6 billion for this one pension plan. But the big picture is \$638 billion of underfunding, and when you extend that to state and local government, you’re up to \$6 trillion,” she said.

Bailing out all of the potentially covered private and public pension plans would cost every household in America an estimated \$52,000, according to Grezler.

“If we’re going to bail out private sector plans that are the unions and private employers that made these broken promises, and we’re sympathetic to coal miners and truckers and whoever else, we’re going to be all the more sympathetic when it’s teachers and firefighters and policemen that are coming to us and saying we’re going to lose our entire pensions,” Grezler said.

Most participants in public pension plans are exempted from coverage by the Social Security program.

Grezler believes the next union pension program for a bailout will be the Teamsters’ Central States, Southeast, and Southwest Pension Fund, which has a \$44 billion unfunded liability.

Contact Mark Tapscott at Mark.Tapscott@epochtimes.net



Coal miner Doug Rutherford takes a break after his shift at a small mine outside Welch, W.Va., on May 19, 2017.

SARAH SILBIDER/GETTY IMAGES



House Majority Leader Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) leave the House floor, where members debated the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) in the Capitol on Dec. 19, 2019.

House Approves Trump’s USMCA Trade Deal

EMEL AKAN

WASHINGTON—The U.S. House of Representatives approved the new trade pact with Canada and Mexico that supplants the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on Dec. 19 in a 385 to 41 vote.

The U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) has strong provisions that serve as a model for future U.S. trade agreements, providing advanced protection for American workers, manufacturers, and farmers.

The agreement has stronger rules of origin for autos and automobile parts that exceed those of both the original NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, which President Donald Trump exited.

Under the new deal, 75 percent of auto content must come from North America, up from the original threshold of 62.5 percent. The higher threshold will keep more parts from other regions out, while boosting production and jobs in the region.

The rules also incentivize the use of high-wage manufacturing labor, which will help provide a level playing field for American producers and workers. The deal is expected to boost production in the United States and Canada, which suffered from lost jobs to Mexico for years.

U.S. dairy farmers who have long complained about Canada’s high market barriers also received some benefit from the deal. In addition to the current exports of dairy products, Canada will provide “new tariff rate quotas” exclusively for the United States. The agreement provides market access gains for American dairy products, including cheese, milk, butter, yogurt, and ice cream.

The deal also establishes modern digital trade rules that have significant implications for the U.S. technology sector.

The United States, Canada, and Mexico agreed on the new trade deal in October 2018 after a lengthy and intense negotiation process, and the countries’ leaders signed it on Nov. 30, 2018. The new pact has to be ratified by legislatures in all three countries to take effect.

Bipartisan Pressure

For the past several months, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) had faced growing bipartisan pressure

It’s just a shame Speaker Pelosi held it up for so long.

Rep. Kevin Brady, ranking member, Ways and Means Committee

within Congress to bring the agreement to the House floor before the end of the year. Business groups and farmers throughout the country had also raised concerns about delays in ratifying the agreement.

Trump and Republican lawmakers accused Pelosi of holding the agreement for more than a year.

“It’s just a shame Speaker Pelosi held it up for so long,” Ways and Means Committee ranking member Kevin Brady (R-Texas) said Dec. 19 in his opening statement for floor debate on USMCA.

Democrats, who control the House, had said they weren’t satisfied with the USMCA, calling for stronger enforcement provisions. After months of negotiations with the Trump administration, House Democrats gave the green light on Dec. 10, paving the way

for a House vote before the upcoming congressional recess.

Pelosi said on Dec. 10 that both sides ironed out their differences on the agreement and made some changes in the areas of enforcement, workers, environment, and prescription drugs. After the announcement, the trade deputies of the three countries signed the modifications to the USMCA in Mexico City.

Once approved by Senate, the deal will replace the old trade agreement, NAFTA. President Donald Trump dubbed NAFTA the “worst trade deal ever made.”

However, the deal may not be able to clear the Senate before the end of 2019. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said last week that the Senate wouldn’t take up the USMCA before the congressional recess. He added

that the Senate was unlikely to vote on the deal until after the expected impeachment trial for Trump.

Modified Deal

House Democrats claimed that they made “transformative changes” to the USMCA in the areas of enforcement, workers, environment, and prescription drugs.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.), who was the lead negotiator for House Democrats, said the USMCA would serve as a model for future U.S. trade agreements.

“Thanks to the hard work of House Democrats, the transformed USMCA agreement closes important loopholes and enables the United States to ensure our trading partners live up to their commitments,” he wrote Dec. 19 on Twitter.

Business groups including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, however, expressed their disappointment over the changes to the USMCA agreement, particularly the removal of biologics provisions that protect American medical innovation.

The original USMCA had granted 10 years of regulatory data protection for biologics inventions. Under the new provisions, however, drug makers will receive only five years of protection in Mexico and eight years of protection in Canada.

“This matters because the European Union offered 10 years of data exclusivity,” said Stephen Ezell, vice president of global innovation policy at the Washington-based think tank Information Technology and Innovation Foundation.

“That would have put the North American life sciences innovation ecosystem on par with the European one. China has announced that it’s going to provide 12 years of data exclusivity. So in essence, our negotiators have not just settled for a lower bar, but no bar, when it comes to this very important underpinning element of life sciences innovation,” he added.

House Democrats opposed the original provision over concerns that it would inflate drug prices. The U.S. laws grant biologics 12 years of protection in the United States. Critics argue that the 10-year provision in the agreement would have increased the protection in Canada and Mexico.

“It really represents a missed opportunity for us,” Ezell said.



The U.S. Capitol on Dec. 18, 2019.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Members of Congress and farmers from across the country rally for the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) on the National Mall in Washington on Sept. 12, 2019.

Markets Shrug Off Impeachment of President Trump: ‘It’s a Non-Event’

TOM OZIMEK

Stock markets in Europe and the United States shrugged off the Dec. 18 vote by the U.S. House of Representatives to impeach President Donald Trump.

U.S. stocks rose to all-time highs on Dec. 19, as investors took news of the impeachment in stride.

Kevin Muir, a veteran trader and author of the MacroTourist, a macroeconomics blog popular among professional investors, told The Epoch Times that markets remained unruffled by the vote because participants know there’s essentially no chance Trump will be removed from office.

“The market knows the impeachment will not make it through the Senate,” Muir said. “It’s a non-event for the markets. You can see that in the fact that the spooz were unchanged overnight.”

“Spooz” is jargon for index futures contracts on the S&P 500 (SPX). As bets on the future prices of U.S. stocks, SPX futures are seen by traders and analysts as a proxy for the direction of market movement.

In addition, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said an initial U.S.–China trade deal would be signed in early January, adding to optimism that was fueled by a breakthrough in trade talks last week.

The S&P 500 advanced 0.5 percent to 3,205.37, marking its first close above 3,200. The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) climbed 137.68 points, or 0.5 percent, to 28,376.96. The Nasdaq Composite (IXIC) gained 0.7 percent to end the day at 8,887.22.

Meanwhile, European shares edged higher on Dec. 19, with the pan-European Stoxx 600 rising 0.1 percent, the FTSE 100 up by 0.2 percent, and the German DAX noting a slight drop of 0.3 percent.

In an interview with CNBC, Mnuchin said the agreement had already been put down on paper, and that it was completely finished and just undergoing a technical “scrub.”

U.S. stocks will continue to have an upward bias until the start of 2020, when investors will look for more specific details in the trade agreement, said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisors in Boston.

“Investors are essentially waiting to see what happens next, moving

It’s a non-event for the markets.

Kevin Muir, veteran trader and author

The market knows the impeachment will not make it through the Senate.

Kevin Muir, veteran trader and author



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) speaks to media at the Capitol in Washington on Dec. 19, 2019.

from a ‘tell-me-something-good’ environment to ‘show-me-something-good,’” Arone said.

Further boosting optimism around the strength of the U.S. economy and labor market, data on Dec. 19 showed the number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits dropping from more than a two-year high last week.

Newly released Labor Department data showed a dip in weekly jobless claims, with initial claims for state unemployment benefits falling by 18,000 to a seasonally adjusted 234,000 for the week ended Dec. 14. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims would fall to 225,000 in the latest week. They expect claims to remain elevated relative to October’s low reading, given the volatility in the data around the holiday season and end of the year.

The four-week moving average of claims rose 4,250 between the November and December survey periods, suggesting some cooling in job growth. The economy added 266,000 jobs in November, the most in 10 months. The unemployment rate fell back to 3.5 percent, the lowest in nearly half a century.

Labor market strength is underpinning consumer spending, keeping the economy on a moderate growth path despite headwinds from the trade tensions and slowing global growth.

McConnell: Impeachment ‘Partisan Rage’

On Dec. 18, House Democrats approved two articles of impeachment

against Trump—abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. No Republicans joined them, and two Democrats joined Republicans for a bipartisan vote against the first article and three Democrats broke ranks to vote no on the second article.

The abuse of power article was passed on a vote of 230–197, with one “present,” and the obstruction article was passed 229–198, with one “present.” The votes don’t remove Trump from office, but sends the articles to the Republican-controlled Senate for trial next month.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said on the Senate floor in Washington on Dec. 19 that Trump’s impeachment was a result of “partisan rage.”

“Last night, House Democrats finally did what they had decided to do a long time ago: they voted to impeach President Donald Trump,” he said, calling the impeachment inquiry the “most rushed, least thorough” in “modern history.”

Democrats have been trying to impeach Trump since before he was nominated as the Republican presidential nominee, McConnell said, citing news reports and lawmakers from 2016 and 2017.

“Now, their slap-dashed process has concluded in the first purely partisan presidential impeachment since the wake of the Civil War. The opposition to impeachment was bipartisan. Only one part of one faction wanted this outcome,” he added.

Zachary Stieber and Reuters contributed to this report.



A television on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange shows Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell discussing the impeachment trial in the Senate, on Dec. 19, 2019.



McConnell Turns Down Call for New Witnesses in Senate Impeachment Trial

IVAN PENTCHOUKOV & ZACHARY STIEBER

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) rejected an offer on Dec. 17 from Democrats to call four new witnesses during the Senate impeachment trial.

McConnell, the Republican majority leader, announced his decision in a speech on the Senate floor in response to a letter from Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). Complying with Schumer’s request would set a “nightmarish precedent,” McConnell said, highlighting the highly partisan process that has marked the impeachment proceedings in the House of Representatives.

“The Senate is meant to act as judge and jury, to hear a trial, not to re-run the entire fact-finding investigation because angry partisans rushed sloppily through it,” McConnell said.

If House Democrats’ case is this deficient, this thin, the answer is not for the judge and jury to cure it here in the Senate ... The answer is that the House should not impeach on this basis in the first place.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell

In his letter, Schumer asked for testimony from acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, former National Security Advisor John Bolton, Office of Management and Budget official Michael Duffey, and Robert Blair, an aide to Mulvaney. House Democrats called on all four to testify but none complied.

Of the four witnesses, Mulvaney and Bolton are the most likely to offer firsthand accounts of the events at the center of the impeachment inquiry. Lacking testimony from Mulvaney and Bolton, House Democrats are nonetheless expected to approve two articles of impeachment based on allegations substantiated on secondhand information and presumptions.

“If House Democrats’ case is this deficient, this thin, the answer is not for the judge and jury to cure it here in the Senate,” McConnell said. “The answer is that the House should not impeach on this basis in the first place.”

Schumer responded in a speech on the Senate floor several minutes after McConnell.

“I did not hear a single sentence, a single argument as to why the witnesses I suggested should not give testimony,” Schumer said. “Impeachment trials, like most trials, have witnesses.”

“Who is for a fair and open trial? Who is for hiding facts, relevant facts, immediate facts?”

McConnell made the announcement as House Democrats prepared to vote on



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) at the U.S. Capitol on Dec. 16, 2019.

Dec. 18 whether to approve two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump. The Democrats allege the president abused the power of his office and pressured Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a potential political rival. Republicans say the president did nothing wrong, and that the Democrats’ case is based on hearsay and presumptions.

House Democrats from vulnerable districts fell in line on Dec. 17, with all but two committing to vote for impeachment. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (D-N.J.) opposes the impeachment and announced that he will switch to the Republican Party. Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) also indicated he will vote “no” impeachment.

“They’ve spent a year trying to figure out how they can make a case for [impeachment]. That’s backward. I just don’t agree with this,” Peterson told The Globe on Dec. 14.

“This is dividing the country for no good reason, because he’s not going to be thrown out of office,” Peterson added. “Why are we doing this?”

No Republican is expected to vote to impeach the president, making the vote the most partisan impeachment in history. The House vote to authorize the inquiry and the Judiciary Committee vote to approve the articles of impeachment likewise passed on entirely partisan votes. Justin Amash, an independent who left the Republican party earlier this year, is expected to vote with the Democrats.

“Pres. Trump’s conduct—using the office of the presidency to seek the aid of a foreign power for personal and political gain—more precisely reflects the type of conduct the Framers of the Constitution sought to remedy through impeachment than that of any president impeached prior,” Amash wrote on Twitter on Dec. 16.

The House impeachment inquiry investigated the events related to the July 25 call between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. During the call, Trump asked Zelensky to “look into” the firing

of Ukrainian Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin. Weeks before his ouster, Shokin seized the assets of Mykola Zlochevsky, the owner of Burisma, the Ukrainian gas firm which at the time paid Joe Biden’s son Hunter to sit on its board of directors. Shokin has said, in a sworn affidavit, that Biden forced his firing because Shokin refused to drop the Burisma investigation. Biden has bragged about getting Shokin removed by withholding \$1 billion in loans from Ukraine.

Trump wrote a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Dec. 17 denouncing the proceedings in the House as a “partisan impeachment crusade.”

“This impeachment represents an unprecedented and unconstitutional abuse of power by Democrat lawmakers, unequalled in nearly two and a half centuries of American legislative history,” Trump wrote.

“The Articles of Impeachment introduced by the House Judiciary Committee are not recognizable under any standard of Constitutional theory, interpretation, or jurisprudence. They include no crimes, no misdemeanors, and no offenses whatsoever. You have cheapened the importance of the very ugly word, impeachment!”

In his speech on Dec. 17, McConnell pointed out that Schumer’s call for witnesses is a departure from the precedent set in the 1999 impeachment trial of then-President Bill Clinton.

“Instead of a tried and true 1999 model—start the trial and then see how senators wish to proceed—the Democratic leader wants to write a completely new set of rules for President Trump,” McConnell said. “He wants to guarantee up front that the Senate hear from the very specific witnesses instead of letting the body evaluate the witness issue after, after opening arguments and Senators’ questions, like back in 1999.”

Speaking to reporters later, Schumer dismissed witnesses some Republicans have said they want to testify, such as Hunter Biden. He also defended his change in opinion from the Clinton trial, alleging the Clinton and Trump impeachment tri-

als would be “completely different.”

“The witnesses in 99 had already given grand jury testimony and we knew what they were to say. The four witnesses we saw have not been heard from, and that is the difference, and it’s a difference that is totally overwhelming,” he said.

McConnell noted that Schumer voted to dismiss the case against Clinton before a trial was held but that Schumer didn’t push for a similar motion in the case against Trump.

“Look, most people understand what the Democratic leader is really after. He is simply trying to lock in live witnesses. That is a strange request at this juncture for a couple of reasons. For one thing, the 1999 version of Senator Schumer vocally opposed having witnesses, even when the question was raised after hours of opening arguments from the lawyers, hours of questions from senators, and a failed motion to dismiss. He favors live witnesses this time before the Senate even has articles in hand,” McConnell said.

“Moreover, presumably, it will be the House prosecutor’s job to ask for the witnesses they feel they need to make the case. So why does the Democratic leader here in the Senate want to predetermine the House impeachment manager’s witness request for them before the House has even impeached the president?”

McConnell said Schumer might have “the same impression” of the House’s case against Trump, “that from everything we can tell, House Democrats’ slap-dash impeachment inquiry has failed to come anywhere near, anywhere near the bar for impeaching a duly elected president, let alone removing him for the first time in American history.”

The Senate is meant to act as judge and jury, to hear a trial, not to re-run the entire fact-finding investigation because angry partisans rushed sloppily through it.

Sen. Mitch McConnell

“He wants to volunteer the Senate’s time and energy on a fishing expedition to see whether his own ideas could make Chairman Schiff’s sloppy work more persuasive than Chairman Schiff himself bothered to make it,” McConnell said.

“We don’t create impeachments over here, Mr. President. We judge them,” he said.

Schumer said he doesn’t want a trial solely consisting of a repeat of what took place in the House, even as he claimed that “the House has built a very strong case against the president.”

“Maybe that’s why the president is afraid, because the House case is so strong that they don’t want witnesses that might corroborate it,” he said.

TAUSEEF MUSTAFA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Schiff Stands by Belief That FISA Probe on Page Was Legitimate

ZACHARY STIEBER

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), who insisted that Republicans were wrong about abuse of the FISA court, and who read salacious, unconfirmed claims about Trump 2016 campaign associate Carter Page during a congressional hearing, indicated he has no sympathy for Page.

A report from Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael Horowitz showed rampant abuse of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) system, including the bombshell that an FBI lawyer changed a detail in an email that contained exculpatory information about Page.

Horowitz's team also found that the FBI relied on former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele's dossier to apply to spy on Page without verifying the information and even as Steele conceded that a source was unreliable. That source later told agents they were passing along a rumor when discussing some of the details Steele included in the dossier, which has been largely debunked.

Page was spied on for a year and was widely reported to be an agent of Russia, a charge that lacked evidence, Horowitz concluded. Schiff helped promote the campaign against Page by reading out accusations from Steele during a 2017 committee hearing.

When Republicans said in a memo the next year that there was FISA abuse, Schiff released a counter-memo claiming, "FBI and DOJ officials did not abuse the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act process, omit material information, or subvert this vital tool to spy on the Trump campaign."

During an interview with PBS' "Firing Line," Schiff declined to offer sympathy for Page, saying: "I have to say Carter Page came before our committee and dissembled for hours of his testimony, denied things that we knew were true, later had to admit them during his testimony."

"It's hard to be sympathetic to someone who isn't honest with you when he comes and testifies under oath. It's

Schiff didn't specify what Page wasn't honest about. Special counsel Robert Mueller in his investigative report didn't accuse Page of making false statements to Congress. Page also hasn't admitted to advising the Kremlin.



Global Natural Gas Ventures founder Carter Page at the One America News studios on Capitol Hill on May 29, 2019.

also hard to be sympathetic when you have someone who has admitted to being an adviser to the Kremlin."

Schiff didn't specify what Page wasn't honest about. Special counsel Robert Mueller in his investigative report didn't accuse Page of making false statements to Congress. Page also hasn't admitted to advising the Kremlin.

Page responded in a statement on Twitter, saying: "There have been various allegations of dishonesty regarding FBI lawyer [Kevin] Clinesmith. On information, belief and firsthand experience since 2017, I have actually found @RepAdam-Schiff to be even more untrustworthy and dangerous with his misuse of @DNC lies."

For the second time in recent days, Schiff declined to say he regrets his bold claim about the FBI's spying on the Trump campaign.

"I don't regret that because at the time, that's what we knew. Now, two years later, 170 interviews later, 2 million documents later, we learn there were serious problems. I will also say though that at the time two years ago, and since, I have continued to make the point that the investigation was properly initiated," Schiff said.

He wasn't asked about his differing conclusion on FISA abuse, even as he viewed the same information as Republicans did. Horowitz did find that the probe met the low bar that the FBI had in place.

Schiff said during the interview that the FBI didn't rely on the Steele dossier. However, Horowitz said that the dossier played an "essential" role in FBI obtaining spy warrants on Page.

"Well, look, it is certainly true that two years ago when we looked into this matter, we weren't aware that a low-level FBI lawyer had misstated information on the FISA application.

There was no way for us to know that at the time," Schiff said on "Firing Line," referring to Clinesmith, the primary FBI attorney on the Trump-Russia investigation.

Clinesmith removed key information from an email that showed that Page had worked with the CIA for years. Clinesmith has since been referred for criminal prosecution. Overall, Horowitz found 17 "significant errors or omissions" in the four applications to get warrants to spy on Page. There were more errors made regarding Woods procedures—internal guidelines that require evidence to back up claims made to the FISA court.

Schiff also said that Horowitz found that the probe into Page "was not driven by political bias." However, Horowitz told Congress that because his team received "unsatisfactory" answers on a lot of issues, he couldn't rule out political bias influencing the myriad of alleged mistakes.

In fact, he told lawmakers last week that text messages obtained by his team showed "evidence of people's political bias."



House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) at the U.S. Capitol on Dec. 18, 2019.



Children look on as U.S. soldiers from 2-77 Field Artillery MPs 359th Steel Warriors patrol in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, on Dec. 18, 2009.

‘Afghanistan Papers’ Are Scathing Indictment of Rule of Expertise

CLIFFORD HUMPHREY



Commentary

For the past few weeks, the news has been all-consuming. The House impeachment hearing, the Horowitz report, and the election in the United Kingdom have dominated the news cycle.

In the midst of all this, though, perhaps the biggest story of the decade broke last week, and many people missed it.

On Dec. 9, The Washington Post published a six-part exposé on the "Afghanistan Papers," a collection of more than 2,000 pages of hitherto undisclosed notes detailing the U.S. military's own critical assessment of the war in Afghanistan and the efforts to conceal its failures from the public.

The account is astonishing and infuriating. The longest war in U.S. history has now been shown to be a cocktail of both neoconservative and progressive ideological agendas, mixed with the blood and treasure of U.S. citizens, garnished with ever-present human hubris, and poured into a vortex by the U.S. military-industrial bureaucracy.

The Afghanistan Papers are an indictment, not only of all the experts who have misled us about the war, but also—and especially—of their ideological expertise, which they believed gave them a right to determine policy for the American people.

War Is a Political, Not a Technical, Act

I recently spoke with a guy who was involved in the military in some capacity that was too secretive for him to divulge (or at least he wanted me to think so). When I questioned the legitimacy of what has been called "the interagency consensus" to set U.S. foreign policy, he immediately informed me that the experts know things that private citizens just can't understand, and so they must, therefore, defer to the experts.

Furthermore, he continued, the man the American people elected to be president wants to pull out as many as 4,000 troops now and is really making it difficult for these experts to carry out what they all agree is a good strategy. How dare he!

It's a little disturbing that members of our military need reminding that self-proclaimed experts have no right to rule free Americans. Our ancestors, who fought a revolution to throw off the smug rule of Britain's king and Parliament, established a republic, not a meritocracy.

The Constitution grants to Congress the power to declare war and to the president the power to conduct war. Both of these institutions are filled with elected officials who are thus responsible to the people.

The American framers, then, believed that war is a political act, to be declared and conducted according to the people's will.

A regular theme in the Papers, the Post reports, is an utter uncertainty about the very objective of the war:

While it's not always clear who is piloting this ship, it's clear that they are no experts.

"Some U.S. officials wanted to use the war to turn Afghanistan into a democracy. Others wanted to transform Afghan culture and elevate women's rights. Still others wanted to reshape the regional balance of power among Pakistan, India, Iran, and Russia."

The question of the purpose of a war is a political question that ought to be answered by a Congress and president that represent the will of the American people, not the competing budgets and ideologies of various, unaccountable agencies. Because war is a political act, it ought to be declared and conducted by people who are directly responsible to the people, not anonymous members of the "interagency consensus" or the intelligence "community."

Tallying Up the Score

The Afghanistan Papers also show, though, that the "experts" aren't very expert at all. The Washington Post has thoroughly uncovered and highlighted abuses and absurdities noted in the Afghanistan Papers that resulted in a disgraceful waste of precious blood and treasure.

Mind-boggling sums of money were wasted. The Pentagon at one point couldn't account for \$1.41 billion. A single contractor was required to spend \$3 million daily on civil projects in an area the size of a U.S. county. Since the start of the war, three agencies alone—the Defense Department, State Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—have spent or appropriated as much as \$978 billion. A representative from USAID admitted that 90 percent of what that agency was forced to spend was superfluous.

The Post's exposé also includes staggering numbers of casualties from the war: 2,300 U.S. soldiers are dead and another 20,000 wounded; 64,000 Afghan security forces have been killed, while only 42,000 Taliban and other insurgency fighters have been killed, and an embarrassingly higher number (43,000) of Afghan civilians have lost their lives as a result of the war.

These numbers are bewildering. While it isn't always clear who is piloting this ship,

it's clear that they are no experts.

In 1964, Ronald Reagan gave a speech criticizing the ambitious exploits of the burgeoning welfare state under the policies of the New Deal and the Great Society. "If government planning and welfare had the answer," he said, "and they've had almost 30 years of it—shouldn't we expect government to read the score to us once in a while? Shouldn't they be telling us about the decline each year in the number of people needing help? ... But the reverse is true. Each year, the need grows greater; the program grows greater."

Yet, he observed, "The more the plans fail, the more the planners plan."

The same is true in Afghanistan. Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis dismissed the Post's reporting by saying that

The "Afghanistan Papers" are an indictment, not only of all the experts who have misled us about the war, but also—and especially—of their ideological expertise.

the Afghanistan Papers are not "revelatory."

"If you read [the articles]," he said, "you'd almost think it's a total disaster, and it's not that at all." He explained that there have been "other gains as well, including an increase in the number of educated Afghan women and populations that have received better access to medical care," according to The Hill.

After 18 years and counting, after all the blood and treasure spilled, all they have to show are higher numbers of educated Afghan women and better access to medical care? What on earth do these things have to do with U.S. interests, and how could they ever begin to compensate for the price we've paid?

President Donald Trump may not have the military expertise of a Clausewitz, and perhaps his desire to end "endless wars" is simplistic, but, as the Afghanistan Papers demonstrate, it's less simplistic than the idea that we can remake Afghanistan in our own image if we just spend enough blood and treasure.

Clifford Humphrey is originally from Warm Springs, Ga. Currently, he is a doctoral candidate in politics at Hillsdale College in Michigan.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Cole Reece from Charlie Co. Sixth Battalion, 101st Airborne Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Shadow, wipes his forehead while tending to U.S. Army Sgt. Jonathan Duralde of Bravo Troop 1-71 CAV, who was injured by an IED blast near Kandahar, Afghanistan, on June 25, 2010.

SAMIRA BOUADU/THE EPOCH TIMES



The Capitol in Washington on Dec. 17, 2018.

Give, Don't Govern

JOHN STOSSEL



Commentary
This week, children may learn about that greedy man, Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge is selfish until ghosts scare him into thinking about others' well-being, not just his own.
Good for the ghosts.
But the way Scrooge addresses others' needs matters.
Today's advocates of equality, compassion, increased spending on education, health care, and so forth, say "we care" but demand that government do the work.
Controlling other people with the power of government doesn't prove you care.
If you want to help the poor, clean the environment, improve the arts, great! Please do.
But if you're compassionate, then you'll spend your own money on your vision. You'll volunteer your work and encourage others to volunteer theirs, by charity or commerce. You don't force others to do what you think is best.
But government is not voluntary.

Government has no money of its own. Whatever it gives away, it first must take from others through taxes.
If you vote for redistribution of wealth, welfare benefits, new Medicare spending, or free education, you can tell yourself you're "generous."

You stand a better chance of getting good results if you do real charity, close to home, where you can keep an eye on it—and without coercing anyone else to do things your way.

But you're not. You're just forcing others to pay for programs you think might help.
That's not generosity. That's control. The more programs you demand, the more controlling you are.
In fact, you're worse than greedy old Ebenezer Scrooge.
With Scrooge, people have a choice. They can work for Scrooge

or quit. They can do business with someone else.
Governments don't offer us choice. Governments say: "Comply or we will lock you up. Pay taxes and we will decide whom to help. No one may escape the master plan."
Why, then, do people react to big government ideas as if they're generous, instead of scary?
Because most people don't think clearly about what it means to tell government to use force against their fellow citizens. They think about society the way their ancestors did.
"Our minds evolved tens of thousands of years ago, when we lived in small groups of 50–200 people," says HumanProgress.org editor Marian Tupy. "We would kill game, bring it back, share it."
The idea of everyone getting an equal share still makes us feel warm and cozy.
Some of you may feel that coziness this week, sharing a Christmas meal. Great. But remember that if you decide that society's resources should be redistributed, that's much more complex than passing meat around a family table.
Seizing control of a big society's resources has unforeseen consequences—ripple effects that are

hard to predict.
Back in the cave, you stood a pretty good chance of noticing which hungry relative needed a bigger share of meat. In the tribe, that sort of central planning worked well enough.

Seizing control of a big society's resources has unforeseen consequences—ripple effects that are hard to predict.

It doesn't work as well once the tribe numbers thousands or millions of people. No tribal elder knows enough to plan so many different people's lives.
Today's politicians, for instance, don't know how many workers will be laid off if they raise taxes on Walmart.
They don't know what innovation will never happen if they cap CEOs' salaries.
They don't know how much wealth creation will be lost if they tax investors' money in order to fund another government program.

Government's built-in ignorance explains how it can spend trillions on failed poverty programs, and then respond to the failure by demanding more funds to continue the same programs.
You stand a better chance of getting good results if you do real charity, close to home, where you can keep an eye on it—and without coercing anyone else to do things your way.
We can invent new ways to give to each other. Philanthropy evolves, much the way markets do, harnessing new technologies and social networks that span the globe.
Innovative ideas, such as micro-rolling, start in one kitchen. If they work, they grow.
By contrast, government grows even when it doesn't work. It bosses people around even when it's not really helping them.
Big hearts are a good thing. Big government is no substitute for them.

John Stossel is author of "No They Can't! Why Government Fails—But Individuals Succeed."

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



Volunteers give food to homeless people in Los Angeles's Skid Row on Thanksgiving Day, on Nov. 28, 2019.



Actor Tommy Steele poses at a photocall to promote his role as Ebenezer Scrooge at the London Palladium on Oct. 27, 2005.

Why Trump Supporters Aren't Protesting in the Streets Over Impeachment

BRIAN CATES



Commentary
Something very strange just happened—something unparalleled in American history.
A president of the United States was impeached, for only the third time in history, and hardly anyone outside the D.C.–Beltway bubble was paying attention or cared about it.
Far from building public support for impeaching President Donald Trump, the Democratic leadership's partisan and unfair hearings in the House of Representatives caused most Americans to tune it out and stop paying attention.
After it was over, and the vote had been taken on the two articles of impeachment, members of the news media were seen commenting to each other how strange it seemed there were no impeachment protests at the capital. Several of these media reporters seemed to think that the lack of protests demonstrates widespread support for Trump's impeachment.
That's nonsense.
If Trump's tens of millions of supporters had any real sense that a genuine threat loomed to remove him from office, this past month and a half would've gone quite differently.

When the denizens of the left are upset about something, there are mass protests, often accompanied by rioting, vandalism, violence, and arrests. The Antifa rioting in many major U.S. cities following Trump's election victory and then again at his inauguration and afterward were ample demonstration of this characteristic of the American left.
But the American right is not like the American left. This impeachment spectacle didn't result in mass protests at the nation's capital. No stores were looted, no bank windows were smashed, no police officers were ducking rocks or bottles. Not a single person appears to have been arrested for anything impeachment-related as the weeks of closed and then open hearings continued.
So although Trump supporters were certainly not happy at having to watch this impeachment theater, their frustrations didn't boil over. That's because everyone knew, with the possible exception of the more rabid corners of the left's base, that none of this was real.

It's understood that once these bogus impeachment articles are sent to the Senate to be the basis for a trial to determine if Trump shall be removed from office, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the Republican senators who control that body fully intend to acquit him.
Because they have known this all along, the Democratic leadership is presently refusing to send the articles of impeachment to the Senate, saying they won't do so until McConnell demonstrates he will run a "fair" trial of the president.
The spectacle of the same Democrats who orchestrated what amounted to a secret Star Chamber in the House basement loudly complaining about not being able to dictate the terms of the Senate trial is deliciously funny.

It's becoming increasingly apparent that the Democrats' impeachment stunt has fired up the GOP, and Trump's base is rallying to the cause of returning him and the GOP to full control of Washington.

Watching House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Reps. Jerry Nadler and Adam Schiff, and Sen. Chuck Schumer rage that the Senate trial won't be "fair" because McConnell won't run it as they demand is the height of hypocrisy.
There was nothing fair about the travesty that Schiff orchestrated in the House basement for the first two weeks, or the sham hearings that Nadler presided over.

You Can't Reelect That Impeached President!
The Democrat strategy is to spend the next 11 months claiming to the American people that they shouldn't even seriously consider reelecting an impeached president.
And should Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg be forced into retirement due to health reasons before this next election, it will also be claimed that the American people simply can't allow an impeached president to nominate her successor.
That's the strategy of an increasingly desperate party that knows Trump and the GOP have a distinct and growing advantage over them as the country heads into the new year.
Nowhere is the advantage of the GOP more evident than in fundraising, where Trump is leading the Republicans to new



Live testimony of the House impeachment hearings against President Donald Trump is shown on a television at the Billy Goat Tavern in Chicago on Nov. 13, 2019.



President Donald Trump walks on the South Lawn to board Marine One at the White House in Washington on Dec. 18, 2019.

donation records. The Republican Party raised a whopping \$20.6 million in November, according to Federal Election Commission data obtained by the Fox News network.
The Republican National Committee stated that this is the best November in the Party's history, which means this historical record was set by GOP donors while the impeachment hearings were underway.
It's becoming increasingly apparent that the Democrats' impeachment stunt has fired up the GOP, and Trump's base is rallying to the cause of returning him and the GOP to full control of Washington.
Meanwhile, the Democratic Party's own fundraising lags far behind. Their October numbers were absolutely abysmal, with only \$6.7 million on hand while carrying over \$7 million in debt.
Unlike in 2016, when Trump was asking the voters to put him into the White House based on their trusting promises of what he would do as president, in 2020 Trump will have a full four-year record of accomplishments to point to as he makes his case to

be reelected.
So as strange as this observation might seem to those who get their news from the DNC Media Complex, as Trump is impeached by rabid partisan Democrats frantic to reverse their political fortunes, he's actually growing stronger and is poised for a most unique reelection campaign, the likes of which this country has never before witnessed.
Whatever Democrats believed the results would be of this impeachment debacle, it's clear at this point they've made a massive miscalculation. Far from following the left's path of civil unrest and protest, Trump supporters will be inspired to send their message to Washington on Nov. 3, 2020.
Brian Cates is a writer based in South Texas and the author of "Nobody Asked For My Opinion...But Here It Is Anyway!"
Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.

CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES



President Donald Trump's supporters at a Make America Great Again rally in El Paso, Texas, on Feb. 11, 2019.

A Response to the Editor of Christianity Today

DENNIS PRAGER



Commentary
The editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, Mark Galli, wrote an editorial calling for the impeachment of President Donald Trump.

In my view, this editorial only serves to confirm one of the sadder realizations of my life: that religious conviction guarantees neither moral clarity nor common sense.

The gist of the editorial—and of most religious and conservative opposition to the president—is that any good the president has done is dwarfed by his character defects.

This is an amoral view that says more about Galli than it does about the president. He and the people who share his opinion are making the following statement: No matter how much good this president does, it is less important than his character flaws.

Why is this wrong?
First, because it devalues policies that benefit millions of people.

And second, because it is a simplistic view of character.

I don’t know how to assess a person’s character—including my own—outside of how one’s actions affect others. Since I agree with almost all of Trump’s actions as president and believe they have positively affected millions of people, I have to conclude that as president, Trump thus far has been a man of particularly good character.

Of course, if you think his policies have harmed millions of people, you will assess his character negatively. But that is not what never-Trump conservatives or Christians such as the Christianity Today editor-in-chief argue. They argue that his policies have indeed helped America (and even the world), although that fact is far less significant than his character.

In the words of Galli: “It’s time to call a spade a spade, to say that no matter how many hands we win

I and every other supporter of the president I know support him for moral reasons, not to win a “political poker game.”

President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump greet troops in Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Dec. 20, 2019.

in this political poker game, we are playing with a stacked deck of gross immorality and ethical incompetence.”

This rhetorical sleight of hand reflects poorly on Galli’s intellectual and moral honesty.

Galli and every other Christian and conservative opponent of the president believe their concerns are moral, and that the president’s Christian and other conservative supporters are political.

This is simply wrong.

I and every other supporter of the president I know support him for moral reasons, not to win a “political poker game.” Galli’s view is purely self-serving; he’s saying, “We Christian and other conservative opponents of the president think in moral terms, while Christian and other conservative supporters of the president think in political terms.”

So, permit me to inform Galli and all the other people who consider themselves conservative and/or Christian that our support for the president is entirely moral.

To us, putting pressure on the Iranian regime—one of the most evil and dangerous regimes on Earth—by getting out of the Iran nuclear deal made by former President Barack Obama is a moral issue. Even New York Times columnist Bret Stephens, who loathes Trump, has written how important the president’s rejection of the Obama-Iran agreement has been.

To us, enabling millions of black Americans to find work—resulting in the lowest black unemployment rate ever recorded—is a moral issue.

To us, more Americans than ever being employed and almost 4 million Americans freed from reliance on food stamps is a moral issue.

To us, appointing more conservative judges than any president in history—over the same period of time—is a moral issue. That whether the courts, including the Supreme Court, are dominated by the left or by conservatives is dismissed by Galli as “political poker” makes one question not only Galli’s moral

thinking but also his moral theology.

To us, moving the U.S. embassy to Israel’s capital city, Jerusalem—something promised by almost every presidential candidate—is a moral issue, not to mention profoundly courageous. And courage is a moral virtue.

To us, increasing the U.S. military budget—after the severe cuts of the previous eight years—is a moral issue. As conservatives see it, the American military is the world’s greatest guarantor of world peace.

Yet, none of these things matter to Galli and other misguided Christians and conservatives. What matters more to them is Trump’s occasional crude language and intemperate tweets, what he said about women in a private conversation, and his having committed adultery.

Regarding adultery, that sin is for spouses and God to judge. There is no connection between marital sexual fidelity and moral leadership. I wish there were. And as regards the “Access Hollywood” tape, every religious person, indeed every thinking person, should understand that there is no connection between what people say privately and their ability to be a moral leader. That’s why I wrote a column for the Wall Street Journal 20 years ago defending Hillary Clinton when she was charged with having privately expressed anti-Semitic sentiments.

That the editor of Christianity Today thinks the president’s personal flaws, whatever they might be, are more important than all the good that he’s done for conservatives, for Christians, for Jews, for blacks, and for America tells us a lot ... about Galli and the decline of Christian moral thought.

Dennis Prager is a nationally syndicated radio talk-show host and columnist.

Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.



TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY IMAGES