

Indivisible Upper Yellowstone - Weekly Journal

The Week of Saturday, December 14 through Friday, December 20, 2019 [#22]

The Week's Most Notable:

Trump is Impeached.

Next: The Senate Trial, or not. Pelosi and Schumer set up for “No fair trial, no Articles of Impeachment, no trial.” A genuine shocker dropped Impeachment Day; if the Dems are serious, united, and skillful with the narrative this might dominate impeachment news into next year. [See Impeachment Notes.]

In general, people are not paying much attention to the details of impeachment. Media coverage is confusing, with one side hyperbolically partisan. In one poll, Quinnipiac, Trump's approval ticked up to 43%, a new high, ditto for Gallup at 45%. So far, the GOP and supporting groups have spent about \$20 million on anti-impeachment ads. The Democrats have spent nothing (not counting Tom Steyer).

Saturday, December 14

[India] **Violent Protests Against Indian Government** – Not well covered in the U.S. but a move by India to isolate and disenfranchise its Muslim population has stirred Muslim and pro-democracy protests.

Sunday, December 15

[China Tariffs] **Progress on Trade War** - As part of the “phase one” trade negotiations with the U.S., China will hold off on additional 5-10% tariffs on U.S. goods. For its part the U.S. halted plans for \$100 million in new tariffs. There is considerable skepticism about the depth of the agreements, as the most difficult negotiations remain.

[China] **Two Chinese Embassy Officials Expelled** – It had been 30 years since Chinese diplomats suspected of espionage were expelled, but it was just revealed that two were expelled this fall. The U.S. just announced a trade deal; this move seems to belie the optimistic news.

[Climate Emergency] **U.N. Climate Talks End** – The Madrid talks were the longest running negotiations on record, but finished without resolution on global carbon markets.

Monday, December 16

[Impeachment] **Polls Show Even Division Over Impeachment** – In the leadup to the House vote, polls take on some significance. Most show impeachment slightly favored by around 45-50%, but removal from office not similarly favored.

[Impeachment] **House Judiciary Committee Report on Impeachment** – The 658-page report charged Trump with both constitutional and criminal offenses and recommended two articles of impeachment: abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

[Impeachment] **Sen. Schumer Requests Witnesses for Senate Trial** – In a letter to McConnell, he asks that Mulvaney, Bolton, Duffey, and Blair be called for the trial. This request and subsequent out-of-hand rejection will become important post-impeachment issue.

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Tuesday, December 17

[Impeachment] **Trump Sends Extraordinary Letter to Pelosi** – In a six-page screed, Trump ranged from rant, “declaring open war on American Democracy,” to deeper rant, “More due process was afforded to those accused in the Salem Witch Trials.” In reality, this was not a letter to Pelosi but to Trump’s base. Composed largely by Stephen Miller and other aides (not the White House counsel) and echoing Trump’s personal animus, it sounds exactly like Fox News and talk radio pundits filtered through his deep sense of grievance. In that info-bubble realm, it’s effective propaganda.

[Ukraine Scandal] **Giuliani Speaks** – Returning from his current Ukraine dirt-digging, Giuliani added to the scandal repertoire by saying, among other things, it was necessary to get Ambassador Yovanovitch “out of the way” and that his trip (doing more quid pro quo) said of Trump, “We’re on the same page.” No doubt, House committees and the SDNY are collecting the best-of-Giuliani confessional nuggets.

[Mueller Investigation] **Rick Gates Sentenced** – Former Trump campaign aide given 45 days in prison, 300 hours community service, three-years’ probation, and a fine. He was a key investigation witness.

[Impeachment] **Pro-Impeachment Demonstrations** – More than 600 demonstrations nation-wide (including 60 people in Livingston’s 60 mph wind) marked the eve of the House vote. Some media took note.

Wednesday, December 18

[Impeachment] **House Votes: Trump Impeached** – As expected, Impeachment is now fact and history. Both articles of impeachment passed by record margins.

[Impeachment] **Pelosi Intimates Withholding Articles of Impeachment** – Though carefully worded, she implied that choosing House trial managers and sending articles to the Senate depended on having “a fair trial.” She said “temporarily” and would not discuss any long[-term plans. [See Impeachment Notes.]

[Affordable Care Act] **Court Strikes Down ACA Mandate** – The reliably conservative Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the individual mandate unconstitutional. The ruling also called for “a more searching inquiry” to see if parts of the ACA could survive without the mandate. Thus, the issue is kicked back to a lower court and into 2021 (after the election). GOP is relieved. Fifty million or more will hang on to their health insurance, for now.

[Trump Outrage] **Trump Insults the Dead, Again** – The late (Feb. 2019) Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), the longest serving member of Congress, was the butt-end of a Trump joke implying Dingell was looking up from Hell. Dingell’s widow is a current Representative; she voted for impeachment. No apology from Trump, of course; classic Trump malice and another disgrace soon lost in the multitude.

Thursday, December 19

[Election 2020] **The Sixth Democratic Debate** – With a field of seven (Biden, Sanders, Warren, Buttigieg, Klobuchar, Yang, and Steyer), there was more time for a moderate pace and unmemorized responses.

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Issues received fuller expression, especially campaign finance and immigration. Post-debate, the media remained fixated on horserace (Biden abides), zingers (Warren v. Buttigieg), and viewership (declining).

[USMCA] **House Passes US Mexico Canada Agreement** – Thereby proving walking (impeachment) and chewing (USMCA legislation) can happen at the same time. It now goes to the Senate and then Trump, who, despite key concessions to Democrats, will take full credit for the NAFTA update.

[Government] **Congress Passes \$1.4 Trillion Spending Bill** – The Senate approved but Trump threatened not to sign because of requirements re military aid for Ukraine. However, all is well; Democrats amended the offending language. The government will stay open.

[Robocalls] **Congress Passes Anti-Robocall Bill** – It toughens restrictions and authorizes anti-robocall campaigns by telephone companies.

Friday, December 20

[Impeachment] **Putin in Solid with Trump** – In further proof of pattern, Trump expressed pleasure in Putin's condemnation of impeachment. Of course he did.

[[Impeachment] **Christianity Today Denounces Trump** – In an apparent break in fundamentalist Christian support, the magazine's editor Mark Galli called for Trump's removal from office primarily in moral terms. Quickly dismissed as "liberal," the shock effect appears thin and fleeting.

Impeachment Notes

The Democrats had planned to delay the Senate trial by withholding the articles of impeachment a couple of weeks ago. The strategy provides more time for new evidence. It puts the Democrats in charge of the pre-trial narrative. It might even get them key documents and witnesses (but don't bet on it). It may set Trump (I want witnesses) against McConnell (no witnesses). Because Republicans publicly announced their bad faith about the trial, it also could give the Democrats moral leverage. So far, objections boil down to the public not tolerating a delayed trial. Yet one poll showed that 71% of the public wants witnesses and a real trial. There is nothing in law or the Constitution to prevent the House from withholding articles until certain conditions are met. In this, there is an ironic echo of McConnell's Merrick Garland strategy – we do this because we can. In the end it comes down to PR and the narrative. Democrats have set the frame; the question is can they paint the most effective picture?

[The IUW Weekly Journal assumes readers are passingly familiar with names and events. For more details, check with internet search (Google it).]

Quote of the Week

"Look what I've done for steel. I mean, steel is back." (Trump at Michigan rally, 12/18/2019)

[U.S. Steel Announces Great Lakes Mill Closing with 1,500 Jobs Lost (12/20/2019)]