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## U.S. Senate rejects witnesses in Trump impeachment trial, clearing way for acquittal



U.S. Senators Fischer and Barasso return to impeachment trial on Capitol Hill in Washington

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Senate on Friday voted against calling witnesses and collecting new evidence in President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, clearing the way for Trump's almost certain acquittal next week.

By a vote of 51-49, the Republican-controlled Senate stopped Democrats' drive to hear testimony from witnesses like former national security adviser John Bolton, who is thought to have first-hand knowledge of Trump's efforts to pressure Ukraine to investigate a political rival, former Vice President Joe Biden.

Those actions prompted the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives to formally charge Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in December.

**RELATED COVERAGE**

- U.S. Senator Murkowski to vote against Trump impeachment trial witnesses: CNN
- Senate may not decide Trump impeachment verdict until next week: CNN
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- That made Trump only the third president in U.S. history to be impeached. He denies wrongdoing and has accused Democrats of an "attempted coup."

The Senate will hear closing arguments in the trial on

Monday, and a final vote will be held at 4 p.m. EST (2100 GMT) on Wednesday, according to a resolution from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that will be voted on later on Friday night.

The Senate is almost certain to acquit Trump of the impeachment charges, as a two-thirds Senate majority is required to remove Trump and none of the chamber's 53 Republicans have indicated they will vote to convict.

In Friday's vote on witnesses, only two Republicans, Mitt Romney and Susan Collins, broke with their party and voted with Democrats.

"America will remember this day, unfortunately, where the Senate did not live up to its responsibilities, where the Senate turned away from truth and went along with a sham trial," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters.

Trump is seeking re-election in a Nov. 3 vote. Biden is a leading contender for the Democratic nomination to face him.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said the trial should end as soon as possible. "The cake is baked and we just need to move as soon as we can to get it behind us," he told reporters.

Friday's vote on witnesses came hours after the New York Times reported new details from an unpublished book manuscript written by Bolton in which the former aide said Trump

directed him in May to help in a pressure campaign to get Ukraine to pursue investigations that would benefit Trump politically.

Bolton wrote that Trump told him to call Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to ensure Zelenskiy would meet with Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, a key player in the campaign, the Times reported.

Robert Costello, a lawyer for Giuliani, called the Times report "categorically untrue." Bolton's lawyer and spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.

Democrats had said the news illustrated the need for the Senate to put Bolton under oath.

But Republicans said they had heard enough. Some said they did not think that Trump did anything wrong, while Senators Lamar Alexander and Rob Portman said his actions were wrong but did not amount to impeachable conduct. Senator Marco Rubio said impeachment would be too divisive for the country, even if a president engaged in clearly impeachable activity.

Lisa Murkowski, a Republican moderate who Democrats had hoped would vote with them to extend the trial, said the case against Trump was rushed and flawed.

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## China chides 'mean' U.S. for travel warning as virus impact spreads

SHANGHAI/BEIJING (Reuters) - The United States angered China on Friday with a warning to Americans not to travel there because of a coronavirus epidemic that has rattled the global economy with increasing disruption to business supply lines.

Originating in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the flu-like virus first identified earlier this month has resulted in 213 deaths in China. Wuhan and the surrounding region are in virtual quarantine.

More than 9,800 people have been infected in China and more than 130 cases reported in at least 25 other countries and regions, with Russia, Britain, Sweden and Italy all reporting their first cases on Thursday or Friday.

"Do not travel to China due to the novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan," the U.S. State Department said, raising the warning for China to the same level as Afghanistan and Iraq.

### RELATED COVERAGE

China says U.S. move to raise travel warning is inappropriate  
Nearly 200 Americans repatriated from China placed under quarantine

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Beijing, which has only just started to mend tattered trade ties with Washington, responded sharply. It noted the World Health Organization (WHO) has commended Chinese containment efforts and not recommended travel or trade curbs.

"The World Health Organization urged countries to avoid travel restrictions, but very soon after that, the United States did the opposite," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said. "It's truly mean."

Many other countries have also advised citizens to put off non-urgent travel to China. After reporting its first two cases of the illness, Russia on Friday restricted direct flights to China, its biggest trade partner.

Panama's canal authority said vessels that had passed through



countries where coronavirus had been confirmed had to report that to authorities.

Singapore, a major travel hub in Asia, stopped entry of passengers with a recent history of travel to China and also suspended visas for Chinese passport holders.

For a full coverage of the coronavirus outbreak, click: [here](#)

### GLOBAL REVERBERATIONS

With major fallout inevitable for China's economy, which is the world's second largest, global shares were heading for their biggest weekly losses since August on Friday. [MKTS/GLOB]

The outbreak could "reverberate globally", Moody's said.

Funeral parlour staff members in protective suits help a colleague with

disinfection after they transferred a body at a hospital, following the outbreak of a new coronavirus in Wuhan, Hubei province, China January 30, 2020. China Daily via REUTERS

In the latest impact to big name corporations, South Korea's Hyundai Motor (005380.KS) said it planned to halt production of a sport utility vehicle this weekend due to a supply disruption caused by the outbreak. Sangyong Motor (003620.KS) said it would idle its plant in the South Korean city of Pyeongtaek from Feb. 4-12 for the same reason.

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**本頭公廟 敬啟**

## 肺炎疫情牽動海內外華人

**美國德州休斯敦 美南新聞傳媒集團**

各位海內外華人同胞暨兄弟姐妹們，正當我們大家共同迎接鼠年來臨之際，一種新型肺炎冠狀病毒正在猛烈衝擊中國大陸，並已蔓延到世界各地；我們身處海外之華人，正為此疫情深感焦慮，我們已經派出一支堅強的採訪團隊，在世界最大的美國休斯敦德州醫學中心，進行全面之採訪，企望世界一流的傳染病醫學專家，提供預防及治療參考。我們在全球各地之華文媒體同仁，此時此刻大家要動員起來，和海內海外同胞來戰勝這場挑戰。

我們希望大家保持鎮靜，拒絕新聞渲染，造成群眾的恐慌，今天我們全世界的媒體人，應以最忠實之態度，來報導疫情，更希望海外華人共同努力，共體時艱，同舟共濟，表現華夏兒女人溺己溺之情操。

**李蔚華 鼠年除夕  
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# Editor's Choice



Protesters attend a NYC Remove Trump Mobilization in Times Square in New York



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Protesters attend a NYC Remove Trump Mobilization in Times Square in New York



U.S. Senate "Majority Whip" Senator John Thune (R-SD) walks from impeachment trial during recess on Capitol Hill in Washington



Migrants travelling to the U.S., at a border between Guatemala and Mexico



A statue representing "Grief" lays her covered face on the shoulder of the statue representing "History" on the Peace Monument near the U.S. Capitol where the Senate impeachment trial of President Donald Trump is going on in Washington



U.S. Senate Majority Leader McConnell walks during break from Trump impeachment trial on Capitol Hill in Washington



Mirzaie, founder of a Sama Dance group dances with her teammates in Kabul

Supreme Court Agrees To Consider Internet Sales Taxes

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide if states should be able to collect taxes on internet sales...

Just over a quarter-century ago, the court ruled that a state could not force mail order catalog companies to collect sales taxes unless they had a physical presence in the state.

Part of the court's logic was that it would be too difficult for mail order companies to compute the widely varying tax rates among, and even within, the 50 states.

But lawyers for South Dakota said that's no longer an issue in the digital age. "Advances in computing have made it easy for retailers to collect different states' sales taxes," they wrote in a court brief.

Internet companies "can instantly tailor their marketing and overnight delivery of hundreds of thousands of products to individual customers based on their IP addresses. These companies can surely calculate sales tax from a zip code," the state said.



U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C

The states also said the current ban on internet sales taxes puts brick-and-mortar retailers, who have to collect sales taxes, at a disadvantage.

Lawyers for the states said they're losing nearly \$34 billion a year because of the physical presence rule, though estimates from the federal Government Accountability Office said the figure is much smaller.

The case came to the Supreme Court after South Dakota passed an Internet tax law in 2016. Hoping to launch a legal battle that would lead the Supreme Court to reconsider its 1992 decision, the state sued out-of-state Internet retailers.

In response, the internet companies said col-



Online sales reach their peak during Christmas holidays. The Supreme Court could rule that these internet sales could be subject to sales tax.

lecting taxes is vastly more complicated and expensive than it was in 1992, because the number of local taxing entities has more than doubled.

States Where Amazon Collects Sales Taxes (as of February 2019)



In the green states, Amazon has a warehouse or other facility and thus is subject to collecting sales tax by virtue of its physical presence. Amazon also has a warehouse in South Carolina, but an agreement with the state allows it to continue shipping to state residents without collecting sales taxes from them until 2020.

Amazon collects sales tax in the blue states. Amazon does not collect sales tax in the red states. Amazon does not collect sales tax in the grey states, because either it has tried to do so and state officials or the courts have ruled against its requirements, or the law has not yet taken effect.

They noted that Amazon, the nation's largest online retailer, now collects sales taxes for purchases made in every state, even though it has a physical presence in only a few. That's proof that "the 'problem' of uncollected taxes," the retailers involved in the case said in their court brief, "has proven to be largely self-correcting."

Since the Supreme Court to confirm its prior rulings protecting the free flow of interstate commerce from overreaching state tax laws." The National Retail Federation, which represents both internet and brick-and-mortar sellers, said Friday it welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to take the case.

"Unfortunately, antiquated sales tax collection rules have resulted in an uneven playing field that's making it harder for Main Street retailers to compete in today's digital economy. This is a basic question about fairness, which all of our members deserve whether they're selling in stores or online," federation president Matthew Shay said in a statement.

(Courtesy https://www.nbcnews.com/politics)

Related

U.S. Supreme Court to Review Bid to Collect Internet Sales Tax

The U.S. Supreme Court will consider freeing state and local governments to collect billions of dollars in sales taxes from online retailers, agreeing to revisit a 26-year-old ruling that has made much of the internet a tax-free zone.

Heeding calls from traditional retailers and dozens of states, the justices said they'll hear South Dakota's contention that the 1992 ruling is obsolete in the e-commerce era and should be overturned. State and local governments could have col-

lected up to \$13 billion more in 2017 if they'd been allowed to require sales tax payments from online merchants and other remote sellers, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office, Congress's nonpartisan audit and research agency. Other estimates are even higher. All but five states impose sales taxes.

Expressing Doubts

"If Quill is overruled, the burdens will fall primarily on small and medium-size companies whose access to a national market will be stifled," the companies argued. "Congress can address this issue in a balanced and comprehensive manner through legislation."

Those supporting South Dakota at the high court include 35 other states, as well as lawmakers who say they've been trying for years to get Congress to address the issue.

Overturning Quill would mean "leveling the playing field for businesses who are employing people on Main Street," Senator Heidi Heitkamp, a North Dakota Democrat, said in an interview. Heitkamp was North Dakota's tax commissioner during its unsuccessful fight for taxing power in the Quill case.



The National Retail Federation, which represents both brick-and-mortar and Internet-only sellers, said it was encouraged by the court's decision to get involved. "We are hopeful it will lead to a positive outcome that reflects the realities of 21st century commerce," the trade group's president, Matthew Shay, said in a statement.

Three current justices -- Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch and Anthony Kennedy -- have expressed doubts about Quill. Kennedy said in 2015 that Quill had produced a "startling revenue shortfall" in many states, as well as "unfairness" to local retailers and their customers. "A case questionable even when decided, Quill now harms states to a degree far greater than could have been anticipated earlier," Kennedy wrote. "It should be left in place only if a powerful showing can be made that its rationale is still correct."

Gorsuch, the newest Supreme Court justice, suggested skepticism about Quill as an appeals court judge. And Thomas has said he would jettison the entire dormant commerce clause, saying "it has no basis in the Constitution and has proved unworkable in practice."

Amazon backs a nationwide approach that would relieve retailers from dealing with a patchwork of state laws. Amazon once relied on the Quill ruling and didn't collect sales tax at all; the company gradually changed its position as it built warehouses all over the country, giving it a greater physical presence in multiple states. The case is South Dakota v. Wayfair, 17-494. The case is South Dakota v. Wayfair. (Courtesy https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles)



'Physical Presence'

The high court's 1992 Quill v. North Dakota ruling, which involved a mail-order company, said retailers can be forced to collect taxes only in states where the company has a "physical presence." The court invoked the so-called dormant commerce clause, a judge-created legal doctrine that bars states from interfering with interstate commerce unless authorized by Congress.

South Dakota passed its law in 2016 with an eye toward overturning the Quill decision. It requires retailers with more than \$100,000 in annual sales in the state to pay a 4.5 percent tax on purchases. Soon after enacting the law, the state filed suit and asked the courts to declare the measure unconstitutional.

"States' inability to effectively collect sales tax from internet sellers imposes crushing harm on state treasuries and brick-and-mortar retailers alike," South Dakota said in its Supreme Court appeal.

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Advertisement for Ocean Palace (珍寶海鮮城) restaurant, highlighting its Cantonese and Hong Kong-style dishes, large banquet hall, and wedding services. Includes address and phone number.

### Has Trump Just Delivered A Death Blow to Amazon?



Jeff Bezos, CEO and Founder of Amazon (Photo/Reuters)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Jeff Bezos has been able to sidestep any liability for counterfeit goods sold on Amazon in the past. But the Trump Administration's recent crackdown on counterfeit goods has backed the retail giant into a major corner.

President Trump has shifted liability for counterfeits from third parties directly to platforms that are selling the goods, and that's very disastrous news for Jeff Bezos' Amazon:

President Trump just issued landmark anti-counterfeiting regulations.

The new customs framework addresses the problem of counterfeit goods. It will put Amazon on the hook for policing counterfeit goods.

The Trump administration's move fundamentally threatens Amazon's operating cost structure and its long-term growth strategy.

Amazon (NASDAQ:AMZN) now faces a huge challenge. The Trump administration unveiled new rules to combat counterfeit and pirated goods last Friday. And the new policies, which were published by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), will now do what the courts

have largely opted not to do: hold Amazon responsible for counterfeit goods.



(PHOTO: NHL)

**Inc. reports the following:** "Global sales of counterfeits are growing at a furious 15 percent each year, and are projected to reach \$1.82 trillion in 2020, with e-commerce making up more than a quarter of that, according to the Global Brand Counterfeiting Report."

#### Amazon Is On The Hook For Counterfeit Goods

The new Customs and Border Protection framework shifts the burden of responsibility directly to Amazon. Now warehouses and fulfillment centers, most notably Amazon, will be legally and financially liable. Jeff Bezos' company will have to bear more of the costs of policing for counterfeits on its platform.

**According to the DHS report:** CBP will adjust its entry processes and

requirements, as necessary, to ensure that all appropriate parties to import transactions are held responsible for exercising a duty of reasonable care.

#### Here's how:

CBP will treat domestic warehouses and fulfillment centers as the ultimate consignee for any good that has not been sold to a specific consumer at the time of its importation.



The new approach means a more heavy-handed enforcement of federal importation laws in Section 321. The DHS will "encourage" platforms like Amazon to voluntarily implement "bulk abandonment and destruction of contraband goods" that haven't been seized by Customs.

**Online outlets like Amazon have become flooded with counterfeit goods** And the DHS clarifies what it means by "encouragement" a couple subheadings later in its report. It will use a combination of "Civil Fines, Penalties, and Injunctive Actions." But the new policy doesn't stop at stronger Section 321 enforcement. The DHS also says it will be taking a more expansive view of the law: ...existing laws and administrative practices may not sufficiently define responsibilities in the e-commerce environment, including who within an e-commerce transaction bears responsibility and legal liability for illicit merchandise and other violations.

The Trump administration will now re-

quire eCommerce platforms like Amazon to turn over vast amounts of third-party vendor data for additional scrutiny.



The government says the new rules not only protect U.S. intellectual property but also ensure public safety. But national security interests are also important. The DHS says counterfeit goods threaten U.S. national security "when introduced into government and critical infrastructure supply chains."

#### Amazon's Margins Just Got Even Thinner

Jeff Bezos is facing a massive counterfeit goods problem on his platform. And Amazon has defended itself from a number of lawsuits by brands who've found counterfeits for sale on the platform. But so far, Amazon has prevailed in court.

Securing Industry reports: Amazon should not be held liable for counterfeit products sold by third-party vendors that it handles via its 'fulfilled by Amazon' service, says a new court ruling.

Bezos has been able to sidestep any liability for counterfeit goods. His lawyers have successfully argued in court that Amazon is a platform, not a seller. But the Trump Administration's crackdown on counterfeit goods have backed the retail giant into a corner.



That will hurt the company's ability to keep prices low and rapidly grow its product selection. The new costs (or fines) will also hurt profits. That could

be a death blow to a company with razor thin operating profit margins, even after underpaying Amazon workers.

By way of comparison, in April 2018, Bloomberg contrasted Amazon's "dinky" 3.8% operating profit margin (on over \$51 billion in sales) to Facebook's 45% margins.

Amazon stock fell 1.22% Friday as the DHS prepared to release its report. (Courtesy ccn.com)



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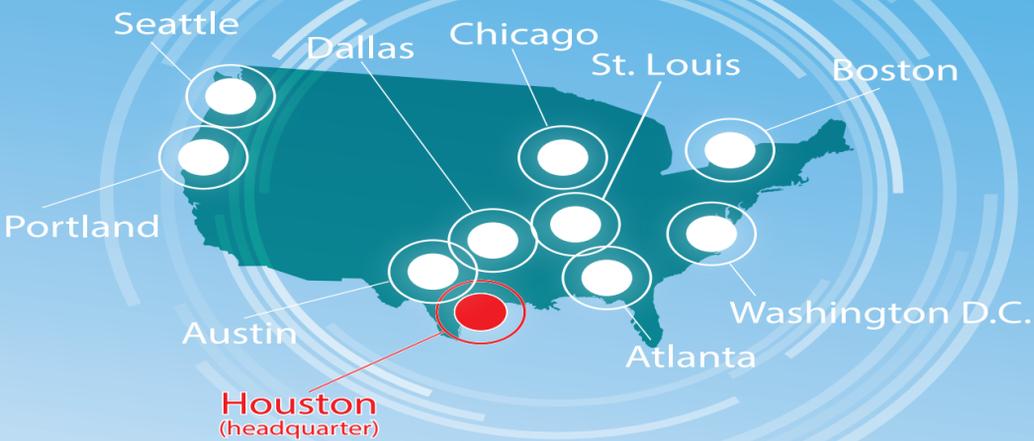
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