

‘Political Theater’? Both Sides Weigh in as Trump Impeachment Trial Looms

The impeachment trial for former President Donald J. Trump is set to begin on Tuesday, and both sides are weighing in on the trial's outcome even before it begins.

Trump's lawyers blasted the impeachment case against him as an act of "political theater," accusing House Democrats of exploiting the chaos and trauma of last month's Capitol riot for their party's gain in a brief obtained by The Associated Press.

Trump's legal brief is a wide-ranging attack on the House case, foreshadowing the claims his lawyers intend to present on the same Senate floor that was invaded by rioters on Jan. 6.

"While never willing to allow a 'good crisis' to go to waste, the Democratic leadership is incapable of understanding that not everything can always be blamed on their political adversaries, no matter how very badly they may wish to exploit any moment of uncertainty on the part of the American people," the defense lawyers say.

In their brief, they suggest that Trump was simply exercising his First Amendment rights when he disputed the election results and argue that he explicitly encouraged his supporters to have a peaceful protest and therefore cannot be responsible for the actions of the rioters. "Instead, this was only ever a selfish attempt by Democratic leadership in the House to prey upon the feelings of horror and confusion that fell upon all Americans across the entire political spectrum upon seeing the destruction at the Capitol on Jan. 6 by a few hundred people," they wrote.

The impeachment attorneys also say there was a “flurry of activity” in the White House to try to get more security to the Capitol on Jan. 6, as tweeted by a writer for Politico:

TRUMP impeachment lawyers, without details, say there was a “flurry of activity” in the White House to try to get more security to the Capitol on Jan. 6 but that “complex” procedures got in the way.

– Kyle Cheney (@kyledcheney) February 8, 2021

“It’s a partisan farce,” Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., who led the effort by Senate Republicans to throw out the impeachment trial as unconstitutional, told Fox News on Sunday. “Zero chance of conviction,” he said when asked if he thinks the Senate could meet the 67-7 threshold required to convict Trump. He cited instances such as Sen. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., urging of her supporters at a 2018 rally to harass Trump officials when they saw them in public or Minnesota Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar’s retweet of a post praising Paul’s neighbor for attacking him in 2017.

“If people want to hold President Trump accountable for language, there has to be a consistent standard,” he said, “and to my mind it’s a partisan farce because they’re not doing anything to Chuck Schumer, not doing anything to Rep. Omar, not doing anything to Maxine Waters.” Last week, Trump declined a House impeachment manager’s directive requesting him to testify in person.

But Sen. Christopher Murphy, D-Conn., told Fox News there is “no comparison” between those statements and Trump’s disputed speech at the rally that took place prior to the Capitol breach, adding that “the circumstances are completely different.”

Trump’s second impeachment trial is opening with a sense of urgency—by Democrats who want to hold him accountable for the

violent Capitol siege and Republicans who want it over as quickly as possible. If needed, the trial will take a Sabbath break at 5:24 p.m. Eastern Friday at the request of David Schoen, one of Trump's lawyers and reconvene on Sunday, Feb. 14, per CNN. {eo}

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