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Resisting access

Pompeo, Democrats trade intimidation charges in Trump probe

By Lisa Mascaro, Mary Clare Jalonick and Jonathan Lemire

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Setting a defiant tone, the Trump administration resisted Congress' access to impeachment witnesses Tuesday, even as House Democrats warned such efforts themselves could amount to an impeachable offense.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tried to delay five current and former officials from providing documents and testimony in the impeachment inquiry that could lead to charges against President Donald Trump. But Democrats were able to set closed-door depositions for Thursday for former special envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker and next week for ousted U.S. Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch.

The escalating exchange of accusations and warnings signaled yet another stiffening in the confrontation between the executive and legislative branches amid the Democrats' launching of the impeachment inquiry late last week. That followed a national security whistleblower's disclosure of Trump's July phone call seeking help from the new Ukrainian president in investigating Democratic political rival Joe Biden and Biden's son Hunter.

In a Tuesday evening tweet, Trump cast the impeachment inquiry as a coup "intended to take away the Power of the People, their VOTE, their Freedoms, their Second Amendment, Religion, Military, Border Wall, and their God-given rights as a Citizen of The United States of America!" In fact, a coup is usually defined as a sudden, violent and illegal seizure of government power. The impeachment process is laid out in the U.S. Constitution.

Pompeo said the Democrats were trying to "intimidate" and "bully" the career officials into appearing and claimed it would be "not feasible" as demanded. House investigators countered that it would be illegal for the secretary to try to protect Trump by preventing the officials from talking to Congress.

Some Trump supporters cheered Pompeo's muscular response to the Democrats. But it also complicated the secretary's own situation, coming the day after it was disclosed that he had listened in during Trump's July phone call with Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy that helped trigger the impeachment inquiry.

"Any effort to intimidate witnesses or prevent them from talking with Congress — including State Department employees — is illegal and will constitute evidence of obstruction of the impeachment inquiry," said three House chairmen, Adam Schiff of the intelligence committee, Eliot Engel of Foreign Affairs, and Elijah Cummings of Oversight.

They said that if he was on Trump's call, "Secretary Pompeo is now a fact witness in the House impeachment inquiry." And they warned, "He should immediately cease intimidating Department witnesses in order to protect himself and the President."

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A growing industry



Independent/Carissa Soukup

Gov. Pete Ricketts speaks with Parker Sargent, a senior at Northwest High School, who is a part of the registered apprenticeship program at Career Pathways Institute. Sargent's apprenticeship is with Case IH.

Ricketts declares October as Manufacturing Month in Nebraska at G.I.'s CNH plant

By Robert Pore

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Surrounded by more than 100 of Grand Island's Case New Holland employees, Gov. Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation Tuesday declaring October as Manufacturing Month in Nebraska.

Last year, the Grand Island plant, which employs more than 500 people, was honored as the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce's Manufacturer of the Year.

Tuesday's ceremony included a tour of the combine and windrower plant, along with a ride in one of the facility's combines for Ricketts. He also shared good news about a recent surge in Nebraska manufacturing jobs.

He told the plant's employees that Nebraska's manufacturing employment reached its highest point in more than 10 years this summer. Ricketts said nearly one in 10 jobs in the state is in the manufacturing sector.

That resurgence in Nebraska's manufacturing comes after the state saw a drop of nearly 11 percent in manufacturing jobs from December 2007 to December 2009 because of a national economic downturn.



Independent/Carissa Soukup

Gov. Pete Ricketts talks to an employee at Case New Holland in Grand Island Tuesday. Ricketts visited CNH for his manufacturing tour. He proclaimed October as Manufacturing Month.

While low commodity prices since 2014 have impacted the Grand Island CNH plant, the equipment built there still provides a lift to both the area and state economy. Last year, combine and thresher exports from Nebraska were ranked fifth among

Nebraska export items, with a value of nearly \$400 million.

For Ricketts, the surge in Nebraska manufacturing jobs is vital toward building momentum to keep growing the state's economy.

■ turn to **MANUFACTURING MONTH**, page 2A

Speaker talks about importance of 18- to 34-year-olds



Jim Smith

By Jeff Bahr

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It's vital that Nebraska continues to attract and hold on to people 18 to 34 years of age, former Sen. Jim Smith told the Noon Rotary Club Tuesday.

People in that age group are "the lifeblood of any econ-

omy," said Smith, who is now the executive director of the Blueprint Nebraska strategic planning process.

Nebraska's peer states are working hard to win the minds, hearts and souls of 18- to 34-year-olds because "that's their economic future. It's ours as well," Smith said.

"For those that have made those bad choices and have left our state — maybe gone to college somewhere else — we need to give them every reason under the sun as to why they should return here," he said. "For those folks who haven't had a chance to experience the good life of Nebraska,

we need to build a case for them as well."

Blueprint Nebraska is a statewide initiative that was envisioned by University of Nebraska President Hank Boush and Gov. Pete Ricketts. Headed by a 21-member steering committee, the project involved close to 350 people.

Smith detailed the project's 15 signature initiatives.

In building economic growth, Nebraska can leverage its people, land and location, Smith said. The state's location makes it a "natural business hub for the country," he said.

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