



SINCE 1854
NIAGARA GAZETTE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2019

NIAGARA-GAZETTE.COM

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK • \$1.50

TRUMP IMPEACHED

Impeachment draws mixed reviews locally

REACTION: County residents divided over need for the process, outcome of historic vote.

BY MIA SUMMERSON AND MARK SCHEER
mia.summerson@niagara

Greg Martin does not consider himself what some might call a staunch Donald Trump supporter, but he does believe the president deserves better than what he got from members of the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday.

Martin, a 38-year-old machinist from the Town of Wilson, said he does not believe Trump's actions rose to the level of impeachment, contrary to the more than 200 members of the House who cast votes in favor of moving forward with it.

Martin considers the impeachment process to be a "complete charade" and a "complete waste of time" and said he does not believe Trump attempted to withhold funds for the Ukraine to pressure officials in that country to investigate his

SEE REVIEW, PAGE 7A

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives Wednesday night, becoming only the third American chief executive to be formally charged under the Constitution's ultimate remedy for high crimes and misdemeanors.

The historic vote split along party lines, much the way it has divided the nation, over a charge that the 45th president abused the power of his office by enlisting a foreign government to investigate a political rival ahead of the 2020 election. The House then approved a second charge, that he obstructed Congress in its investigation.

The articles of impeachment, the political equivalent of an indictment, now go to the Senate for trial. If Trump is acquitted by the Republican-led chamber, as expected, he still would have to run for reelection carrying the enduring stain of impeachment on his purposely disruptive presidency.

He saw the blame flowing the other direction. He told a political rally in Michigan that "crazy Nancy Pelosi's House Democrats have branded themselves with an eternal mark of shame."

The votes were 230 for impeachment and 197



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Members walk on the floor as voting begins in the House of Representatives in the first article of impeachment against President Donald Trump at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday.

against on the first count, 229-198 on the second.

Democrats led Wednesday night's voting, framed in what many said was their duty to protect the Constitution and uphold the nation's system of checks and balances. Republicans stood by their party's leader, who has frequently tested the bounds of civic norms. Trump called the whole affair a "witch hunt," a "hoax" and a "sham," and sometimes all three.

The trial is expected to begin in January in the Senate, where a vote of two-thirds is necessary for conviction. While Democrats had the majority in the House to impeach Trump,

Republicans control the Senate and few if any are expected to diverge from plans to acquit the president ahead of early state election-year primary voting.

Pelosi, once reluctant to lead Democrats into a partisan impeachment, gaveled both votes closed, risking her majority and speakership to follow the effort to its House conclusion.

"Today we are here to defend democracy for the people," she said earlier during floor debate.

Trump, who began Wednesday tweeting his anger at the proceedings, pumped his fist before an evening rally in Battle

Creek, Michigan, boasting of "tremendous support" in the Republican Party and saying, "By the way it doesn't feel like I'm being impeached."

No Republicans voted for impeachment, and Democrats had only slight defections on their side. Voting was conducted manually with ballots, to mark the moment.

On the first article, abuse of power, two Democrats, Rep. Jeff Van Drew of New Jersey, who is considering switching parties to become a Republican, and Rep. Colin Peterson of Minnesota voted against impeaching Trump. On the second article, obstruction, those

two and freshman Rep. Jared Golden of Maine voted against. Democratic Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, who is running for president, voted "present" on both.

What Pelosi called a sad and solemn moment for the country, coming in the first year that Democrats swept control of the House, unfolded in a caustic day-long session that showcased the nation's divisions — not only along party lines, but also by region, race and culture.

The House impeachment resolution laid out in stark terms the two articles of impeachment against Trump stemming from his July phone call when he asked the Ukraine president for a "favor" — to announce it was investigating Democrats ahead of the 2020 election. He also pushed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to probe unsubstantiated corruption allegations against Joe Biden, the former vice president and 2020 White House contender.

At the time, Zelenskyy, a young comedian newly elected to politics, was seeking a coveted White House visit to show backing from the U.S. ally as it confronts a hostile Russia at its border. He was also counting on \$391 million in military aid already

SEE IMPEACH, PAGE 7A

Pot vaping on the rise

BY JOE MAHONEY
CNHI State Reporter

ALBANY -- New York lawmakers are preparing to consider legalizing marijuana just as a new federal study shows that high school students are vaping the drug with far greater frequency than they were two years ago.

The research, funded by the National Institutes for Health (NIH), found marijuana vaping among 12th graders has more than doubled over the past two years. The survey was conducted for the federal government by University of Michigan researchers.

The NIH reported that 20.8 percent of high school seniors reported vaping marijuana, with 10th graders not far behind at 19.4 percent.

"Teens are clearly attracted to vaping products, which are often concentrated amounts of drugs disguised as electronic gadgets," Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, said in a statement. "Their growing popularity threatens to undo years

of progress protecting the health of adolescents in the U.S."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, has said he supports the legalization and regulation of adult use marijuana, with a minimum purchase age set at 21 years of age. That is also the minimum age now in New York for the purchase of tobacco products.

Opponents of legalized weed pounced on the national survey to argue that New York leaders are sending the wrong signal to youth by advocating for an end to marijuana prohibition.

Kyle Belokopitsky, director of the New York State Parent Teacher Association, said the argument the New York law would stop youths less than 21 from getting marijuana "doesn't hold weight with us."

Noting Cuomo and some lawmakers backed a ban on flavored tobacco products because they are marketed at youth, Belokopitsky said, "It literally boggles my mind" they would support marijuana legalization.

Cuomo's proposal, when

introduced earlier this year, would allow marijuana to be sold in edible and smokeable form as well as concentrated THC oils -- for vaping cartridges.

Colton Grace, spokesman for Smart Approaches to Marijuana, an anti-legalization advocacy group, contended those calling for the legalization of marijuana are partly responsible for the higher usage rates of the drug by teenagers.

"The reason why people are thinking it is no longer harmful is all a result of the efforts for legalization and commercialization and the rhetoric around it," Grace said.

He said strains of marijuana now being cultivated have far greater potency than the varieties purchased on the streets by previous generations.

Legislation championed by Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, D-Buffalo, estimates the state could reap \$456 million annually from taxes on legal marijuana sales.

Using the spelling for

the drug in state law, her bill states: "Rather than curtailing youth-marijuana usage, existing marihuana laws have led to an illicit market that has done little to address marihuana usage by minors."

The state's cannabis policies, according to the legislation, are "broken, unjust and outdated."

"Existing marihuana laws have led to profligate spending of law enforcement resources, and discriminatory police practices that have perpetuated systematic racism and discrimination increasing the prison population with non-violent offenders," the bill states.

Despite a push from Cuomo this year, marijuana legalization efforts were bottled up at the statehouse, but will be in play again come January.

In some upstate regions, lawmakers are cool to the legalization effort if not outright opposed.

Legalization, said Assemblyman Angelo Morinello, R-Niagara Falls, would pose challenges for efforts to keep cannabis out of the hands of those

less than 21 years of age.

Morinello, a former city court judge, also questioned the suggestion that legal pot would yield a revenue bonanza for the state treasury.

"They want to legalize it for the wrong reasons," he said.

Also voicing strong reservations was Assemblyman Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay

He said he backed legislation this year that decriminalized the possession of less than two ounces of marijuana. But with the full legalization push, he noted police are concerned highway safety could be jeopardized due to difficulty in determining whether drivers are impaired by the drug.

The rising use of THC vapes among youth is another concern, Jones said. "We really need to take a look at this proposal very carefully."

Joe Mahoney covers the New York Statehouse for CNHI's newspapers and websites. Reach him at jmahoney@cnhi.com.

Homeland Security: Green Light Law endangers New Yorkers

SPOKESPERSON:
Controversial law prevents DHS from obtaining records.

BY CONNOR HOFFMAN
connor.hoffman@lockportjournal.com

The Department of Homeland Security believes a recently implemented state law is threatening the safety of New York residents.

The Driver's License Access and Privacy Act, which has been dubbed the "Green Light" Law, allows undocumented immigrants the ability to apply for driver's licenses. The state law forbids undocumented citizens' records from being shared by DMV employees with a federal agency for the purpose of enforcing immigration law.

"This will protect criminals at the expense of the

SEE LIGHT, PAGE 7A



INSIDE Classified 5-7B Comics 8B Local 3A Lottery 3A Obituaries 4-5A Opinion 6A Police 3A Sports 1-5B Weather 2A

300 THIRD STREET, NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14303
OPENING WEEK SPECIAL
FREE CHIPS & DRINK
Present this coupon to cashier to receive free Chips and drink with the purchase of any sandwich. May not be combined with other discounts. Restrictions apply. Expires 12/31/19
THE CORNER DELI

THE CORNER DELI
SOUPS • SALADS • SANDWICHES
Located inside Sheraton Niagara Falls Hotel
300 THIRD STREET, NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14303
716.278.2654 | thecornerdeli.com

NOW OPEN
HOURS 11AM - 4PM Mon-Fri
SHERATON
NIAGARA FALLS