

# Trump-Russia: House committee to see Mueller evidence

Deal comes as Democrats weigh up impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump.



The House judiciary committee chairman, Jerrold Nadler, listens during opening statements on Monday in the first hearing on Robert Mueller's report. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

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The House judiciary committee expects to receive the first files of underlying evidence from Robert Mueller's report soon, after a sudden shift by the justice department as Democrats weigh impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump.

It is unclear if the deal, announced moments before the start of a judiciary committee hearing with Watergate star witness John Dean, will ultimately be enough for Democrats, who have called for the full, unredacted report and underlying documentation from the special counsel's work.

However, it signalled the first real breakthrough in the standoff over the report and came at the start of a week of increased activity by the House in the Trump-Russia investigation.

The Republican senator for New York, Jerrold Nadler, , the chairman of the

committee, said the justice department will provide some of Mueller's "most important files" and all members of the committee will be able to view them. He said the files will include those used to assess whether Trump obstructed justice.

In response to the agreement, Nadler said the panel will not vote to hold the attorney general, William Barr, in criminal contempt, for now. But the House will still vote on a resolution on Tuesday that would empower the committee to file a civil lawsuit for the materials, if Democrats decide to do so.

That was the expected outcome even before the deal, as Democrats have shifted their strategy toward lawsuits and away from criminal contempt. Criminal contempt would be referred to the justice department, where it would certainly be rejected. And Democrats have been encouraged by some early wins in court as Trump has broadly fought congressional oversight.

Nadler said in his statement he would give the justice department time to comply.

"If the department proceeds in good faith and we are able to obtain everything that we need, then there will be no need to take further steps," Nadler said in a statement. "If important information is held back, then we will have no choice but to enforce our subpoena in court and consider other remedies."

The sudden turn of events came ahead of a pivotal week for House Democrats, who are torn over whether to move forward with impeachment proceedings and searching for ways to focus public attention on Trump's actions.

Dean, a White House counsel under Richard Nixon who helped bring down his presidency, testified on Monday that Mueller had provided Congress with a "road map" for investigating Trump.

He said he saw parallels between Mueller's findings regarding Trump and those of congressional investigators looking into Nixon's administration decades ago. He pointed to the way the presidents used their pardon power in an attempt to influence witness testimony, and their efforts to seize control of the investigation and direct the efforts of prosecutors.

Trump, who was apparently watching the televised hearing, tweeted: "Can't believe they are bringing in John Dean, the disgraced Nixon White House counsel." He added his oft-repeated claim of "No Collusion - No Obstruction!"

Democrats and Republicans are vying to win over public opinion in the fallout from Mueller's investigation. While the special counsel concluded there was not sufficient evidence that the Trump campaign conspired with Russia to swing the 2016 election, Mueller also said he could not exonerate the president of obstruction of justice in the investigation.

The procession of hearings and votes in the week ahead is partly designed to mollify anxious Democrats who have pushed the House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, to begin impeachment proceedings immediately. A growing number of Democrats say the House should start impeachment proceedings in part because Trump is obstructing justice by refusing to comply with congressional subpoenas for documents and testimony. Pelosi prefers to continue the investigations.

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