Why McConnell is Rushing the Senate Trial

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The latest CNN poll (1/20/20), conducted after the articles of impeachment were delivered to the Senate by the House managers, reveals that for the first time a majority (51%) of Americans now believe President Donald Trump should be removed from office and 69% believe witnesses should be called by the Senate.

The new poll also finds majorities of Americans view each of the charges on which Trump will face trial as true: 58% say Trump abused the power of the presidency to obtain an improper personal political benefit and 57% say it is true that he obstructed the House of Representatives in its impeachment inquiry.

Perhaps this polling data explains why Majority Leader Mitch McConnell released the rules governing the Senate trial less than 24 hours prior to the start of the proceeding and then suddenly changed
them once the trial began. And that also provides insight into why McConnell and a majority of Republican Senators, unlike the Clinton trial, wanted to rush the presentations and initially blocked eleven amendments that would have guaranteed upfront witnesses and documents being subpoenaed. This, of course, likely will prevent Americans and the Senate from being able to hear all the relevant facts needed to reach a rational judgment. After all, it is doubtful Republicans will change their mind on this issue once the presentations are over. Hardly a fair trial.

Sadly, what appears clear is that McConnell and a majority of Republican senators fear revelation of the facts and how the airing of those facts might influence public sentiment and potentially the outcome of the trial and/or the 2020 election. The questions for all of us, regardless of party affiliation or political ideology, are: Will they get away with this maneuver and does it violate constitutional norms, not to mention the nation’s revered standards of due process?

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