# 1. McConnell tees up Barrett nomination, setting up rare weekend session

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Jordain Carney from The Hill <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/522454-mcconnell-tees-up-barrett-nomination-setting-up-rare-weekend-session>

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) on Friday teed up Judge Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court nomination, paving the way for a rare weekend session roughly a week before the November election.

McConnell's move sets up a vote to end debate on Barrett's nomination for Sunday, with a final vote to confirm her to the Supreme Court expected by early Monday evening.

The Senate is expected to be in session on both Saturday and Sunday debating Barrett's nomination, though her confirmation is guaranteed absent an unlikely last-minute surprise.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) told reporters on Thursday that there were negotiations ongoing between McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) about if senators would have to be physically in the Capitol all weekend, with some senators indicating they wanted to go back to their home states on at least Saturday.

"It’s mixed. There’s some who want to get home for political reasons. And there’s some who want to stay hell or high water. It’s the usual situation. Let me tell you, the whole caucus takes this very seriously, whatever the final decision is we’re going to stick together," Durbin, the No. 2 Senate Democrat, told reporters about the schedule.

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.), Durbin's counterpart, indicated that whether senators are stuck in town on Saturday is largely up to Democrats, adding that "whenever they decide what they want to do, which votes they want to trigger."

"Our members are prepared to be here through the weekend to, you know, defeat any votes that they want to bring up," Thune said.

Guidance from McConnell's office on Friday morning indicated that there was "expected procedural harassment" from Democrats, who have been forcing votes on the Senate floor this week, and that reporters "should prepare for a long weekend."

The votes on Barrett's nomination will come roughly a month after President Trump announced his intention to nominate her to succeed the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg during a Rose Garden ceremony on Sept. 26. Ginsburg's death kicked off an explosive fight over the future of the Supreme Court.

Republicans, when they confirm Barrett, will set a new record for the closest to a presidential election a Supreme Court nominee has been confirmed.

It comes four years after they denied a hearing or a vote to Merrick Garland, then-President Obama's final Supreme Court nominee, though Republicans argue the fact that they now control both the Senate and the White House is a significant difference.

Despite the closeness of the election, and the significance of the seat, there were few surprises in Barrett's nomination, with Republicans quickly rallying behind McConnell's plan to give her a vote.

Democrats have protested the GOP plan, including forcing votes to gum up the Senate floor and boycotting the Judiciary Committee vote on her nomination on Thursday.

But they've also acknowledged that absent GOP help they are unable to stop Barrett from being confirmed, which would lock in a 6-3 conservative court.

Because Republicans hold a 53-47 seat majority in the Senate, Barrett can lose three GOP senators if all Democratic senators vote no and still be confirmed by letting Vice President Pence break a tie.

Only Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) has said she will oppose Barrett because she does not believe the Senate should vote on a nominee before the Nov. 3 election.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) has also said she does not believe the Senate should take up a nominee before the election, but hasn't said how she will vote on Barrett.

Murkowski met with Trump's nominee this week, a one-on-one that she used to discuss Alaska-related issues and Barrett's legal philosophy.

“I’ve shared for a while that I didn’t think we should be taking this up until after the election and I haven’t changed," Murkowski told a reporter on Capitol Hill after the meeting.

Asked if she was saying she would vote no on Barrett's nomination, Murkowski added, "That means I haven’t changed my mind on that."

A spokesperson for Murkowski said on Thursday that the moderate GOP senator has not publicly stated how she will vote for Barrett.

“Early on I announced my preference that the Senate not take up a Supreme Court nomination this close to a presidential election, applying the same standard I used in 2016, but the process moved forward and we are now just days away from a vote to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg," Murkowski said in a statement.

"Whether to confirm the nominee, Judge Amy Coney Barrett, is a decision each Senator has to make on their own. I appreciated the opportunity to have a lengthy discussion with Judge Barrett, just as I met with Judge Garland in 2016," Murkowski added.

#USPolitic #USElection2020 #USSupremeCort

# 2. China's Xi Jinping delivers thinly-veiled swipe at US during Korean War anniversary speech

23 Oct 2020

Steven Jiang and Ben Westcott from CNN <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/23/asia/xi-jinping-korea-war-anniversary-intl-hnk/index.html>

Chinese President Xi Jinping has warned that "blackmailing, blocking and extreme pressure" will lead to "nowhere but a dead end" in a thinly-veiled attack on the United States, during a speech commemorating China's entry into the Korean War 70 years ago.

Xi was speaking at an event Friday marking the anniversary of Chinese troops crossing the border into North Korea in October1950, a conflict that Beijing refers to as "the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea."

The Chinese leader spoke at the same time as the final US presidential debate was taking place in Nashville, Tennessee between President Donald Trump and his Democratic challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden. During the debate, the two opponents clashed over who would be better positioned to handle China, with both men promising to stand up to a resurgent Beijing.

In his speech Friday, Xi highlighted alleged acts of US aggression towards China during the Korean War and emphasized the claim that an outgunned Chinese military managed to defeat its "legendary" American counterpart.

Xi, who is also commander-in-chief of China's People's Liberation Army, warned that while Beijing wanted peace it would not back down from a fight.

"The Chinese people mean that we should speak to the invaders in a language they understand," Xi said.

In China, the war has long been hailed as a great victory, despite North Korea failing to make any gains after its initial invasion of the South was rebuffed. Pyongyang would likely have been defeated without Beijing's assistance.

Ahead of Xi's speech, held before a packed audience at the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing, the room rose to applaud a group of Chinese Korean War veterans who were in attendance, and held a moment of silence in tribute to the nearly 200,000 Chinese soldiers killed in the conflict.

The event was the latest in a series of high-profile government commemorations and newspaper articles marking the anniversary and China's claimed victory over the US.

In a [lengthy front-page commentary](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-10/21/content_273828.htm) published Wednesday in the People's Liberation Army Daily, the official newspaper of China's military, the author hailed the "glorious victory" that "left the Americans with the deepest impression that what Chinese people say counts," and to respect "China's red lines."

Xi's speech and the surrounding propaganda blitz stand in contrast to the more understated events that were held 10 years ago on the 60th anniversary of China's entry to the Korean War.

In 2010, the commemorations culminated in a symposium held in Beijing attended by the nation's leaders including then Vice President Xi, who delivered a keynote speech. While touching on many of the same points about the war's historical significance, Xi's remarks back then noticeably lacked the not-so-subtle rebukes and warnings aimed at Washington found in Friday's speech.

Tensions between the two world powers have risen across a range of fronts in recent years, including the status of Taiwan, allegations of widespread human rights abuses against Muslim minorities in the western region of Xinjiang and disagreements over technology and trade.

In an op-ed published Wednesday, US national security adviser Robert O'Brien said that Xi's "ambitions for control are not limited to the people of China," while Biden has vowed to continue pursuing closer ties with Taiwan in an op-ed for America's[largest Chinese-language newspaper,](https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202010220014) World Journal.

## "Seeking hegemony... will not work"

Chinese troops, redesignated as the People's Volunteer Army, crossed into North Korea in October 1950 to assist their fellow Communist regime, which was being rapidly pushed back toward the border with China by the combined forces of South Korea and the United Nations.

During his speech Friday, Xi painted the US as an imperialist aggressor with far superior technologies and weaponry, that was nevertheless repelled by the combined forces of China and North Korea.

"After painstaking efforts in the war, the Chinese and Korean armies finally defeated the opponents and also broke the legendary US Army, who were supposed to be invincible," Xi said.

The Chinese leader said that their victory in the Korean War was a message to the "suppressed nations and peoples in the world."

"Any country or any army, no matter how powerful they used to be, standing against the trend of the international community and acting perversely ... will surely backfire," he said.

While Xi never mentioned the US outside of his comments specifically on events during the Korean War, he ended his speech with a warning to states who endorsed "unilateralism, protectionism and extreme egoism."

"No blackmailing, blocking or extreme pressuring will work. Acting in one's own way and serving one's own interests will not work. Seeking hegemony and bullying others will not work and will lead the world to nowhere but a dead end," he said.

CNN's James Griffiths contributed to this article.

#China #InternationalRelationship

# 3. How the debate on the climate crisis ricocheted from Planet Earth to Planet Trump

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Bill Weir from CNN <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/23/politics/climate-crisis-presidential-debate-analysis-weir-wxc/index.html>

"We're running out of time so we gotta get on to climate change," moderator Kristen Welker said as the final presidential debate of 2020 came to a close.

Unintentionally, it was the truest and most tragic statement of the night.

And it brought plans from two different planets.

"We have the Trillion Trees program," President Donald Trump began when they were finally asked how they'd save a livable planet. "We have so many different programs."

There were no other programs. Instead, the President hit a gusher of lies, confusion and insistence that the US remain reliant on fossil fuels, despite the overwhelming evidence that the hell and high water of 2020 is just the beginning.

"Global warming is an existential threat to humanity," [former Vice President Joe Biden](https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/candidate/biden)began, back on Earth. "We have a moral obligation to deal with it."

Biden ran through parts of his plan, from charging stations on highways to retrofitting buildings to save energy use, and focusing on harnessing renewable resources like wind and solar energy.

Twelve feet away on Planet Trump, such predictions brought a smile. "I know more about wind than you do and it's extremely expensive," the President claimed. "Kills all the birds."

In reality, the US is late to a global boom in offshore wind farms, and turbines kill [a tiny fraction of the hundreds of millions of birds taken each year by windows and cats](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/09/essay-to-save-birds-should-we-kill-off-cats/#close).

On Planet Trump last night, "solar doesn't quite have it yet." But on Planet Earth earlier this month, a renewable energy company called [NextEra was more valuable than ExxonMobil](https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/05/investing/exxon-stock-solar-wind-nextera/index.html) and the International Energy Agency declared that "[solar projects now offer some of the lowest cost electricity ever seen](https://webstore.iea.org/download/summary/4153)."

Running against such arrogant science denial, Biden could probably shoot a spotted owl on Fifth Avenue and not lose support of the Sierra Club. But rather than follow his primary instincts and play it safe and squishy, Biden has [absorbed the urgent ideas of Jay Inslee](https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/07/jay-inslee-and-david-wallace-wells-on-bidens-climate-plan.html), Bernie Sanders and the Sunrise Movement, rolling out a climate plan bigger than Barack Obama's by a factor of 20.

[Uncontrollable gigafires](http://www.cnn.com/2020/10/17/us/california-wildfires-saturday/index.html) and a conga line of hurricanes make this an easier political lift, but Biden is quick to temper the nightmare of unpredictable weather with the dream of 50,000 electric car charging stations, millions of energy-efficient remodels and lots of green $50-an-hour, union jobs. "It will cost $100 trillion!" Trump said of the plan, inflating Biden's stated cost by fifty times.

With an obvious fear of losing Pennsylvania frackers the way Hillary Clinton lost West Virginia miners, Biden's been careful not to declare the end of fossil fuel.

But he also outlined the damage.

The question was about environmental justice, a platform plank elevated by the summer of Black anger after the killing of George Floyd. What would each candidate say to the families of color more likely to live next to toxic industry?

"The families that we're talking about are employed heavily and they are making a lot of money," Trump replied. "More money than they've ever made."

Then came the most personal story of the night.

"When my Mom would get in the car, when there was the first frost, to drive me to school, turn on the windshield wipers, there would be an oil slick on the window," Biden said, describing the health costs of living near the Marcus Hook complex of refineries on the Delaware River as a boy. "That's why so many people in my state were dying and getting cancer."

Biden shot back at Trump: "It doesn't matter what you're paying them. It matters how you keep them safe."

Trump watched Biden intently during this windshield wiper story, and as the moderator tried to segue into the next question, he took the tender moment to attack.

"Would you close down the oil industry?" Trump asked.

"I would transition from the oil industry, yes."

"Oh, that's a big statement," the President replied.

(Fact check: True. And certain to be repeated in an attack ad near you).

"(Oil) has to be replaced by renewable energy over time," Biden said, repeating the last words for emphasis. "Over time."

But as the moderator said, we're running out of time. The United Nations climate panel suggests that the planet must cut emissions in half in just 10 years and hitting Biden's net zero goals by 2035 will require seismic, head-spinning changes in every sector of the world's largest economy as fossil fuel giants strand trillions in known reserves.

"Our health and our jobs are at stake," says Biden.

"They want to knock down buildings and build new buildings with little, tiny small windows," says Trump.

And two planets collide.

#ClimateChange #USElection2020 #Industry

# 4. GOP prays Trump stopped the bleeding

23 Oct 2020

Gabby Orr and Burgess Everett from Politico <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/23/trumps-allies-exhale-debate-fret-rallies-431706>

Before the debate hall even emptied out, the presidential motorcade was whisking Donald Trump back to Washington for a short layover ahead of his return to the campaign trail on Friday, which some Republicans worry could carry new risks in the final sprint to Election Day.

But on the debate stage, the president’s campaign advisers and Capitol Hill allies say their candidate delivered a restrained performance and persuasive closing pitch — one that could pull late-breaking voters into his column and put vulnerable GOP candidates at ease after months of being dragged down by the president’s deteriorating standing in key battleground states.

“His performance last night did what it needed to do to let the Senate candidates win or lose their own races,” said Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. “I didn’t see any drag created.”

“It was helpful for our Senate candidates and hopefully helpful for the president,” added Sen. Roy Blunt, a Republican from Missouri.

Whether Trump receives the eleventh-hour boost he desperately needs will depend on which version of the president voters see coming out of the final debate in the week that remains before the Nov. 3 election. As he returns to base-revving campaign events where unpredictability reigns, Republicans are worried Trump could quickly undo any gains he might have made here Thursday.

The president’s hourlong rallies have become ground zero for his worst impulses — from coarse language and meandering monologues to misleading claims about the Covid-19 pandemic — and often result in controversies that aides must spend days cleaning up. Recently, Trump has used the venues to push dubious and unconfirmed reports about Hunter Biden, the son of Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, that have little resonance with pocketbook voters.

“The president’s job 10 days out is to convince voters that Joe Biden would decimate American industries, pack the courts and send small businesses back into coronavirus lockdowns,” said one adviser to the Trump campaign.

“He’s screwing himself with the Hunter Biden stuff and he needs to cut it out,” the person added.

Though there were plenty of moments Thursday night when Trump trained his focus on the Biden family’s business dealings, there were also times when he seized on policy differences between him and his Democratic opponent that Republicans have long encouraged him to amplify in his closing pitch to voters.

“He was obviously able to rein in his inner self that sometimes gets the better of him,” said West Virginia Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, a Republican.

In one exchange during the final minutes of the debate, Trump latched on to Biden’s promise to transition the U.S. away from fossil fuels if he is elected president.

“That’s the biggest statement because basically what he’s saying is he’s going to destroy the oil industry,” Trump said directly into the cameras. “Will you remember that, Texas? Will you remember that, Pennsylvania?”

By the end of the night, some Trump aides and allies were grappling with simultaneous feelings of euphoria and frustration. Pleased with his decision to ditch the erratic behavior that caused Biden’s poll numbers to rise after the first presidential debate in September and focus on casting the former vice president as a creature of the political establishment, they griped that the past month of intense catch-up could have been avoided if Trump had turned out a similar performance last time around.

“Why didn’t he do this in the first debate?” wrote a second Trump campaign adviser in a text message at the end of the night.

Others offered a more optimistic takeaway, suggesting 11 days is ample time to change the dynamics of the 2020 race, despite Trump’s lagging poll numbers in pivotal battleground states and among demographic groups that were critical to his Electoral College victory four years ago.

“The momentum has been on our side and the president has kept it going,” Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel said in a brief interview as she left the debate site at Belmont University. “The president knocked it out of the park and hit some key differences on policy issues that needed to be addressed.”

To some extent, the praise Trump earned from Republican allies was an implicit acknowledgment that the hot-tempered disposition he typically brings to his campaign rallies — and which millions of Americans saw at the first debate in Ohio — works against his reelection. But Trump will spend the remaining days of the race in just that environment, rallying with devoted MAGA fans across Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, Wisconsin and New Hampshire.

Yet Thursday night’s performance had a soothing effect on the GOP: Vulnerable Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who has not endorsed Trump, said Trump “did well” Thursday after criticizing both candidates’ performance last month.

However, at times during Thursday’s debate, Trump reverted to old habits that have previously rankled senators like Collins. During a segment focused on immigration, Trump said undocumented immigrants who show up for court hearings are those “with the lowest IQ.” Against the backdrop of a summer filled with race-related demonstrations and legislative measures to combat police brutality, Trump squandered an opportunity to speak directly to people of color in a calm and empathetic way — using the moment to instead compare himself to Abraham Lincoln, dismiss the Black Lives Matter movement and praise his own push for criminal justice reform, increased funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and so-called opportunity zones in economically distressed communities.

“As far as my relationship with all people … I am the least racist person in this room,” Trump said, trying to scan the crowd gathered in the darkened debate hall.

“I don’t know what to say,” he added. “I mean, they could say anything. It makes me sad. I am the least racist person.”

In another exchange, Trump demanded to know if Biden’s nickname was “the big man” in unverified emails that emerged last week allegedly documenting Hunter’s overseas business dealings.

“Don’t give me this stuff about how you’re this innocent baby. They are calling you a corrupt politician,” he said to Biden, giving viewers a taste of the vitriolic and conspiratorial attacks that have become staples of his rambunctious campaign rallies.

“Clearly they see an advantage of raising the issue of alleged corruption. It seems to be a feature of their campaign,” said Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, the intelligence chair, of Trump’s attacks on Hunter. “I think there are a lot of people interested in the topic, but obviously people who are not going to vote for the president aren’t."

In the week leading up to Trump’s final appearance on the debate stage, the president flouted traditional preparation in favor of maintaining a rigorous campaign schedule. His laser-like focus on Biden’s son — on his Twitter feed, at campaign rallies and in a heated “60 Minutes” interview with Leslie Stahl — gave some Republicans pause, worried that he would bungle his last opportunity to reach undecided and skeptical Republican voters if he eschewed mentions of the economy and policy differences with Biden to focus squarely on Hunter Biden. Hours before the debate began, Trump’s campaign aides announced that Tony Bobulinski, an ex-business partner of Hunter Biden, would attend as a special guest of the president.

But if the president is taking notes from his own campaign, Republican allies who want him to focus on what they perceive as Biden’s more controversial positions — on issues like hydraulic fracking, oil dependency and coronavirus restrictions — may be sorely disappointed in the coming days. Between Thursday night and Friday morning, the Trump campaign and RNC sent out six emails mentioning Hunter Biden and calling attention to “explosive” new reports about his alleged interactions with foreign business firms.

“Joe Biden can no longer ignore this massive and growing scandal and the news media can no longer avoid asking him about it,” Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh said in a statement Friday morning.

#USElection2020 #Trump #Biden