

ELECTION 2020

Biden, Buttigieg targeted in fifth debate

10 Democratic presidential hopefuls end the evening with clashes over race and political leadership.

By EVAN HALPER, MELANIE MASON AND SEEMA MEHTA

ATLANTA — Democratic presidential hopefuls clashed on the debate stage Wednesday night over issues of race and political leadership as front-runners were challenged on their ability to rebuild the diverse coalition that elected President Obama.

As the contest for the nomination has grown increasingly unsettled, both newly ascendant candidate Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Ind., and former Vice President Joe Biden found themselves in the hot seat.

A debate that had been relatively sedate most of the way through grew testy in its final stretch, starting when New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker laced into Biden for a recent comment opposing marijuana legalization, which the former vice president called a “gateway drug.”

“I thought you might have been high when you said it,” Booker said, arguing that marijuana is effectively legal for those with privilege. “There are people in Congress right now that admit to smoking marijuana while there are kids in jails [See Debate, A8]

All-white top tier in a diverse party

The debate highlights the peril Democrats face in winning back the White House if they lose black voters. **NATION, A9**

Sondland implicates president

Ambassador says he was following Trump’s orders in pressuring Ukraine



DREW ANGERER Getty Images

**AMBASSADOR** Gordon Sondland, a Trump donor and political appointee, right, said he was “adamantly opposed” to the White House suspension of nearly \$400 million in military aid Congress approved for Ukraine.

He saved himself, not Trump

Sticking with the president was risky, so Sondland broke away

By NOAH BIERMAN

WASHINGTON — Minutes after he took his seat Wednesday in the House impeachment hearing, Ambassador Gordon Sondland made himself clear: He had come to save his own reputation, not the president’s.

The process was “less than fair,” the onetime Trump loyalist complained.

But he did not blame the Democrats conducting the historic inquiry. Instead, the longtime Republican donor from Oregon laced into his bosses at the State Department and the White House — who tried to bar him from testifying and refused him access to his own files and



JIM LO SCALZO EPA/Shutterstock

**PRESIDENT TRUMP** speaks to reporters about the hearings. “I don’t know him very well,” Trump said of Ambassador Gordon Sondland, whom he appointed.

phone records.

Then, with a batch of private emails he was able to recover and fresh recollections in hand, he let loose.

“Was there a quid pro quo?” he said. “The answer is yes.”

Speaking slowly and clearly from a long prepared statement, he implicated President Trump’s entire inner circle as part of a scheme to demand Ukraine investigate Trump’s political rivals in exchange for U.S. military aid and a White House visit.

Vice President Mike Pence, acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. [See Ambassador, A10]

By JENNIFER HABERKORN AND SARAH D. WIRE

WASHINGTON — Gordon Sondland, the most significant witness yet in the House impeachment inquiry, insisted Wednesday that he and other senior administration officials had “followed the president’s orders” in pushing Ukraine to investigate President Trump’s political foes, offering a firsthand account that shattered several key White House denials.

Sondland, a political appointee who serves as U.S. ambassador to the European Union, did not seek to defend Trump’s months-long pressure campaign, saying he was “adamantly opposed” to the White House suspension of nearly \$400 million in military aid intended to help Ukraine fight Russian aggression.

And while Trump and his allies have staunchly denied that the president and his private attorney Rudolph W. Giuliani sought a “quid pro quo” to get Ukraine to investigate Democrats in exchange for a White House meeting, Sondland said he believed it was exactly that.

“Was there a quid pro quo?” he asked near the start of the seven-hour hearing. “The answer is yes.”

His eyewitness account provided House Democrats with the strongest evidence yet in their inquiry into Trump’s efforts to get Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, to announce an investigation into a debunked conspiracy theory involving the 2016 U.S. election and former Vice President Joe Biden.

Sondland told the House Intelligence Committee that Giuliani, at Trump’s behest, had pressed Ukraine to launch an investigation in exchange for a White House meeting with Zelensky, and said he “presumed” that the blocked military aid was part of the scheme.

During questioning, he eviscerated Republican arguments that Trump had a legitimate interest in battling corruption in Ukraine. He said Trump didn’t care if Ukraine’s president actually conducted an investigation [See Sondland, A10]

GRAMMY NOMINATIONS



SHIRLAINE FORREST WireImage

**WITH HER** anthems of body positivity and self-empowerment, Lizzo tops 2020’s contenders with eight nods, including for record, song, album and best new artist.

She is 100% that niche

Lizzo leads a youth movement with Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X as Recording Academy moves to diversify

By RANDY LEWIS

Freshman-class recording artists Lizzo, Billie Eilish and Lil Nas X collectively landed 20 Grammy Award nominations for 2020 on Wednesday, as the Recording Academy, which determines nominees and, ultimately, award recipients, wholeheartedly embraced the music industry’s newest faces and sounds.

The singer, rapper and instrumentalist Lizzo, 31, whose sassy empowerment songs unexpectedly became chart-topping anthems,

Music genres are made to be broken

Country-rap, goth-pop and R&B-hip-hop artists winningly defy tradition, pop critic Mikael Wood writes. **CALENDAR, E1**

leads the field with eight nominations. Seventeen-year-old goth-pop phenom Eilish, who tied with rapper Lil Nas X for the second-most nominations with six, and Lizzo further distinguished their nascent careers by landing nomina-

tions in all of the Grammys’ top four general categories: record, album, song and best new artist, the first time in the awards’ 62-year history that two artists have done so in the same year.

Eilish, a native of Los Angeles’ Highland Park, also earns the distinction of becoming the youngest artist in Grammy history nominated for album of the year, for her chart-topping debut, “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?”

“I grew up watching the Grammys with my family,” she told The Times recently. [See Grammys, A5]

California isn’t using minors to test pot shops’ compliance

By PATRICK MCGREEVY

SACRAMENTO — Each year, California authorities send minors into thousands of liquor stores and bars to attempt to buy alcohol or cigarettes. The stings catch hundreds of clerks and bartenders selling to underage customers.

But two years after the state began licensing marijuana shops, the agency tasked with enforcing cannabis laws has not

conducted similar stings targeting California’s multi-billion-dollar pot industry, the largest in the country.

Proposition 64, which was approved by voters in 2016 to legalize the sale and cultivation of pot, does not require the use of sting operations to enforce the law. But proponents of the initiative promised aggressive action to keep marijuana out of the hands of minors, and experts and critics of legalization say the state is failing to use an important method to

hold the industry accountable.

“Decoy stings are a great indicator of how prevalent noncompliance truly is,” said Republican Assemblyman Tom Lackey of Palmdale, a retired California Highway Patrol officer. “They also help send a message that there are consequences for not following the law. California should be using every tool in the belt to go after noncompliant operations.”

[See Stings, A11]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

A dramatic change in the weather

A rainbow arches over surfer Jonah Haack, 13, at Newport Beach on Wednesday as the first storm of the season brought rain, lightning, hail and mountain snow to the Southland. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

**Weather**  
Passing showers.  
L.A. Basin: 66/52. **B6**

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Israel in limbo as centrists fail in bid to lead

Voters face a third election in less than a year after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s main rival, Benny Gantz, is unable to form a coalition government. **WORLD, A3**

Thanksgiving for everyone

This year you can go classic turkey or all-out vegan with our easy holiday recipes. Also, the very special Thanksgiving Food Power Rankings. **FOOD, F1**

