

Democrats silent on Trump's election coup plans as confirmation hearings begin on Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett

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Four days of hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the confirmation of Trump's nomination of right-wing religious zealot Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court opened on Monday.

The Democrats' refusal to mount any serious opposition to Barrett's installation on the court was on full display. Most significant was their silence on the connection between the rush to install Barrett prior to the November 3 election and Trump's stated intention of using a 6-3 far-right majority on the court to override an unfavorable election result and effectively overturn the Constitution and establish dictatorial rule.

The silence of the Democrats is all the more politically criminal coming only days after the FBI and Michigan state authorities announced indictments against 13 fascists who were plotting to kidnap and murder Governor Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, seize control of the Michigan state legislature and overturn the state government. These are among the forces Trump has praised as "very good people."

During his debate with Joe Biden last month, Trump called on the fascist "Proud Boys" to "stand back and stand by," while he refused to commit to accepting defeat at the polls, on the basis of bogus claims of ballot fraud. He declined to ensure a peaceful transition of power and said he would demand that the courts "look at the ballots." In announcing his choice of Barrett, a disciple of the deceased leader of the far-right bloc on the high court, Antonin Scalia, Trump said, "I think this [the election] will end up in the Supreme Court. We need nine justices."

As the Michigan attorney general has stated, the plot is only the "tip of the iceberg" of a nationwide conspiracy involving armed militia forces in multiple states. The nerve center of the plot is the White House, and its prime mover is Trump.

The Senate hearings are fraught with political and historical significance. They take place in the midst of a political, social and economic crisis of American capitalism unparalleled since the Civil War, intensified by the coronavirus pandemic.

Besides her potential role in an election coup d'état, Barrett will shift the Supreme Court further to the right, gutting or overturning the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision that established

the legal right to abortion, reversing protections for gays, attacking the separation of church and state, lifting restrictions on guns and blocking federal regulation of business.

As a young lawyer at the firm of Republican power broker James Baker, Barrett helped prepare the legal briefs used by the George W. Bush campaign in the Supreme Court decision that halted vote-counting in Florida and stole the 2000 election for the Republican Party. Scalia organized the 5-4 ruling and authored an opinion that said the American people had no constitutional right to vote for the president, and members of the Electoral College could be chosen instead by state legislatures.

As a judge on the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit since 2017, Barrett issued rulings opposing abortion rights, contraception and gun control, and voted in favor of executions.

In her opening statement to the Judiciary Committee, Barrett claimed the mantle of Scalia and hinted at her opposition to social reform and her fulsome support for corporate interests. She said:

Courts have a vital responsibility to enforce the rule of law, which is critical to a free society. But courts are not designed to solve every problem or right every wrong in our public life. The policy decisions and value judgments of government must be made by the political branches elected by and accountable to the people. The public should not expect courts to do so, and courts should not try.

A prominent member of the charismatic Catholic group "People of Praise," she added,

I believe in the power of prayer, and it has been uplifting to hear that so many people are praying for me.

Two years ago, the Democratic Party evaded any defense of democratic rights and the social conditions of the working population by turning the confirmation of Trump nominee Brett Kavanaugh into a #MeToo-style political circus. The Democrats focused their opposition entirely on allegations of sexual abuse by Kavanaugh, purportedly committed 36 years prior, when the nominee was 17 years old.

This time around, the Democrats abandoned any pretense of seeking to prevent Barrett's confirmation within days of Trump's announcement, which followed by eight days the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the leader of the four-justice liberal bloc on the court.

In line with the increasingly right-wing character of the campaign of Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris, Senate Democrats decided to play down the issue of abortion rights and other basic democratic questions and instead focus almost exclusively on defense of Obama's Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as "Obamacare." The Supreme Court is slated to hear oral arguments on a Republican-backed suit to declare the law unconstitutional on November 10, one week after the election, and Barrett is expected to ensure a majority to abolish the program.

Trump and the Republicans are attacking the pro-corporate program from the right, seeking to abolish insurance for some 20 million people and remove all restrictions on the insurance, health care and pharmaceutical giants. The Democrats, however, are making no attempt to mobilize popular opposition to the attack on health care and are instead cynically seeking to exploit the issue to win votes for the Biden campaign.

Monday's hearing consisted of opening statements from the members of the Judiciary Committee and Barrett, with questioning of the nominee set to begin Tuesday. With the exception of a brief reference by Dick Durbin of Illinois to Trump's unprecedented refusal "to commit to a peaceful transition of power if he loses the election," not a single Democrat on the panel said a word about the threat of an electoral coup, let alone the fascist plot in Michigan.

Dianne Feinstein of California, the ranking Democrat on the committee, set the tone in her opening remarks. She began by declaring, "I want this to be a good hearing," and immediately proceeded to say, "Most important, health care coverage is at stake for millions of Americans." She held up a photo of a constituent who depends on Obamacare to cover a preexisting condition, setting a pattern that was repeated by virtually all of the Democrats who followed her.

Kamala Harris took time off from the campaign trail to appear remotely. She issued a string of attacks on Trump and the Republicans, calling the hearing itself a reckless violation of coronavirus guidelines, blaming Republicans for the failure of Congress to enact a new pandemic relief bill, denouncing the pre-election rush to pack the court with another right winger, and calling out the Republicans' hypocrisy after they refused to consider Obama's 2016 Supreme Court nominee Merrick

Garland on the grounds that it was a presidential election year.

She downplayed the defense of abortion rights and said nothing about Trump's threat to turn the election into a coup or his incitement of fascist forces.

Indicative of the base cowardice of the Democrats, the *Washington Post* reported Monday morning: "Democratic aides said their senators are united in their view that they will not press Barrett about her beliefs—hoping to avoid the mishap from her circuit court confirmation hearing in 2017, when Feinstein told Barrett that 'the dogma lives loudly within you.'"

Following the hearing, at a press conference given by Democrats on the committee, Durbin repudiated even the token gesture of opposition announced Sunday night by Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer. The top Senate Democrat said that the Democrats would boycott votes on the confirmation of Barrett both on the Judiciary Committee and the Senate floor to deny the Republicans the quorum needed to confirm the nominee before the election. As Schumer well knows, however, the Republicans can easily circumvent any such parliamentary stunt.

Asked at the post-hearing press conference if the Democrats planned to boycott votes on the confirmation, Durbin said he had heard nothing of any such plan and affirmed that he planned to cast a vote on the floor of the Senate.

Significantly, neither of the two leading pro-Democratic newspapers, the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post*, carried an editorial Monday on the Barrett hearing. By contrast, the pro-Trump *Wall Street Journal* published an editorial headlined, "Ballot Deadlines and the Supreme Court" and an op-ed piece titled, "The Supreme Court and the Election Returns."



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