As millions vote against him, Trump pushes violence and suppression of votes

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As voter turnout passes 100 million in the United States, with tens of millions more going to the polls Tuesday, President Donald Trump is stepping up his preparations to defy the popular will and stay in office. Trailing in the polls, and with his latest legal challenges to the casting and counting of ballots having been thrown out by the courts, Trump is turning to the open instigation of violence.

More than 98 million people had cast ballots by Monday night. In 2016, when Trump won a narrow Electoral College victory over Hillary Clinton despite losing the popular vote, there were 138 million votes cast. This year's turnout could reach or eclipse 160 million.

If the polls of those who have voted already are accurate, it is likely that Trump goes into Election Day trailing former Vice President Joe Biden by as many as 25 million votes. He would need to win the same-day, in-person vote by an overwhelming margin to gain reelection.

If the voting trend continues—and if the votes are counted fairly rather than suppressed—the result would be a political rout of Trump and the Republicans. This can only be understood as an expression of overwhelming popular anger against the Trump administration, both for its outrageous refusal to fight the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 235,000 people in America and for its intensifying threats against democratic rights

These popular sentiments were foreshadowed in the mass protests that broke out across the United States, in virtually every city and town, in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis last May. These sentiments appear to be rising to the surface again in a massive repudiation of the Trump administration and its ultra-right policies.

The voter turnout in itself represents an initial shift in political consciousness among millions of working people and young people. A few figures illustrate the demographics of the election:

• In 2016, some 8.9 million people voted in Texas, long ruled by the Republican Party, and Trump won by 800,000 votes. In 2020, more than 9 million people have already cast early votes or voted by mail, with millions more expected at the polls Tuesday. The largest increases in voter turnout are in the major cities, and the state is now considered to be closely contested.

• In 2016, 4.1 million people voted in Georgia, a traditionally Republican state that Trump carried easily. In 2020 early voting alone, 3.8 million people have already voted, with the heaviest turnout in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and the state is considered a toss-up.

• In North Carolina, early voting and mail-in ballots combined have already surpassed the total of 4.5 million who voted in 2016. The highest voter turnouts are in the cities of Raleigh, Durham and Charlotte, and the youth vote is sharply higher than in 2016, when Trump carried the state by a margin of about 3 percent.

• A study by Tufts University found that 7 million young people have already voted and that youth were a higher percentage of voters in 13 of 14 "battleground" states, as compared to 2016. The largest increases in youth turnout were in a band of states across the South: Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Texas.

If the Democratic Party and Biden come to power as a result of the election, they will be the completely undeserving beneficiaries of a popular repudiation of Trump and his fascistic policies, including ongoing efforts to stage a political coup against the election itself. Biden has offered no program to address the needs of working people and, like Trump, defends the interests of corporate America and its military-intelligence apparatus.

The response by Trump and the Republicans to the flood of voters to the polls has been to intensify legal actions to delay the counting of mail ballots—so Trump can issue a bogus claim of victory on the basis of in-person voting only—or to suppress early votes entirely, as a lawsuit filed in Houston, Texas, sought to do.

The Texas lawsuit challenged the validity of 127,000 votes cast by residents of Harris County (Houston) who used a drive-through voting facility offered by the county because of coronavirus fears. The ballots constituted more than 10 percent of all the early votes cast in Harris County, which is heavily Democratic.

The legal arguments put forward by the Republicans—three candidates and a longtime party activist—were openly anti-democratic. They claimed that it was illegal and unconstitutional for the local government to offer citizens safer

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ways to vote during the pandemic, and they demanded that the courts throw out the ballots on the eve of the election, effectively disenfranchising 127,000 people. They cited the notorious 2000 Supreme Court decision in *Bush v. Gore* as a precedent for federal intervention in a state election dispute.

After the Texas Supreme Court, whose every judge was nominated by a Republican governor, denied the request, the plaintiffs switched to a federal court. An ultra-right Republican judge, Andrew Hanen, appointed by George W. Bush, ruled that the plaintiffs had no standing to sue and could not show they had suffered damage from people casting ballots. He also noted that the drive-through process had been announced during the summer, but the lawsuit arrived in his courtroom only the day before the election. He added that the remedy sought, suppression of the votes, was far too drastic.

The Trump campaign lost a second major case in a battleground state when a Nevada judge denied its motion to halt counting of mail ballots in Clark County, Nevada, which includes Las Vegas, pending litigation on the exact procedures to be followed in storing, opening and counting ballots. The transparent purpose of the lawsuit was to slow the count of mail-in ballots, thought to favor Biden and the Democrats, and allow Trump to claim "victory" in Nevada on the basis of the in-person votes only. Clark County accounts for two-thirds of the votes cast in Nevada elections.

The more Trump sees voters surge to the polls, and the less success he has in the courts, the more he is encouraging his fascistic supporters to engage in intimidation and outright violence in an effort to block an honest count of the votes and stalemate the declaration of a winner. The aim is to allow Republican-controlled state legislatures to intervene in key states and select a pro-Trump slate of electors, regardless the popular vote in the state. Trump is no doubt also considering using the US military to put down protests against his attempt to steal the election.

Speaking Monday in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Trump condemned the state government's extension of the deadline for receiving mail ballots postmarked by November 3. "They made a very dangerous situation, and I mean dangerous, physically dangerous, and they made it a very, very bad, they did a very bad thing for this state," he threatened. Referring to Democratic Governor Tom Wolf, he warned: "Please don't cheat, because we're all watching. We're all watching you, governor."

Earlier on Monday, he condemned a US Supreme Court ruling effectively upholding the deadline extension in Pennsylvania, tweeting: "The Supreme Court decision on voting in Pennsylvania is a VERY dangerous one. It will allow rampant and unchecked cheating and will undermine our entire systems of laws. It will also induce violence in the streets. Something must be done!"

From whom will the "physical danger" and "violence in the streets" come? Who are the potential victims? This is a clear effort by Trump to intimidate state officials, using the threat of right-wing violence along the lines of the plots already uncovered in Michigan, Virginia and other states, where fascist militias have targeted Democratic governors and others deemed insufficiently loyal to the would-be dictator in the White House.

In anticipation of widespread popular unrest against a Trump coup attempt, a number of state governors, both Republican and Democratic, have mobilized the National Guard. Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, an anti-Trump Republican, alerted 1,000 troops for potential duty in urban areas across the state. Oregon Governor Kate Brown declared a state of emergency for the Portland area from Monday through Wednesday and mobilized an unspecified number of National Guard troops. A unit of the Illinois National Guard was deployed to Chicago in a convoy of Humvees, at the orders of Democratic Governor J. B. Pritzker.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has already mobilized 1,000 National Guard troops for deployment in five major cities—Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin and San Antonio—citing the danger of mass protests on the scale of those that followed the police murder of George Floyd in May.

The atmosphere of foreboding in official Washington on the eve of the election was expressed in the headline of an article posted by the *Atlantic* magazine: "How Trump Could Attempt a Coup." While former Vice President Biden has publicly dismissed the danger of Trump seeking to steal the election or defy its outcome, the *Atlantic* article reveals that the Biden campaign has carried out "a massive planning exercise for rapid responses to dozens of scenarios in which Trump tries to interfere with the normal functioning of the election."

These responses are supposedly limited to "predrafted emergency motions in state or federal court." The article goes on to say that "The campaign will be ready on an hour's notice to file for a temporary restraining order in any case it has thus far been able to anticipate."

The *Atlantic* discusses Trump's possible use of federal agents and paramilitary forces, or even the regular military, but does not report on any discussions between the Biden campaign and the Pentagon, which are undoubtedly taking place.

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