

Trump falsely claims “fraud” as vote counting erases his leads in Georgia and Pennsylvania

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In an appearance on national television Thursday, President Donald Trump denounced what he falsely called “fraud” as the basis of his impending defeat in the 2020 presidential election. He was reacting to his plummeting leads in Georgia and Pennsylvania as mail ballots, predominantly from Democratic voters, were being counted in both states, despite lawsuits brought by the Trump campaign.

By Friday afternoon, Biden was in the lead in both states. As of this writing, Biden is leading by more than 13,500 votes in Pennsylvania and nearly 2,000 votes in Georgia. Biden leads in Nevada by more than 20,000 votes and in Arizona by more than 43,000 votes. As mail-in ballots from the main states are counted, Biden’s lead continues to grow, as the large majority of ballots cast by mail were from Democrats.

Biden has clearly won both the popular vote and the Electoral College. As of Friday afternoon, however, none of the media networks have called the election, and Biden has not declared victory. This is creating the opportunity for Trump and the Republicans to intensify their plans for challenging the results and make lying charges of fraud.

Trump’s televised appearance Thursday made clear that, for the first time since the ritual of presidential concessions was established in 1896, the defeated candidate is refusing to concede, introducing into the next two-and-a-half months an element of extreme crisis. Trump’s combative response to his impending defeat contrasts with the stance taken by the Democrats in 2016, when President Barack Obama insisted that Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton concede the very evening of the election, even though she had a massive lead in the popular vote.

While Trump at present lacks the political support to overturn the results of the election, he is laying the

basis for a campaign to present himself as the victim of a “stab in the back.” This narrative will be used by himself and members of his family to perpetuate the development of a fascistic movement, which will become a permanent and significant presence in American politics.

The president took the podium in the White House Briefing Room at 6:45 p.m., in the midst of the network evening news broadcasts, but ABC, NBC and CBS all cut away from his remarks as he began to voice a series of blatantly false and self-contradictory claims about the process of vote counting in the five states where results in the presidential voting remain in question.

The decision of the three networks—all owned by giant media corporations—to cut away from a presidential appearance was unprecedented. It indicated that major sections of corporate America have lost confidence in Trump and fear that his attempt to defy an electoral verdict will provoke massive popular opposition and destabilize the United States politically.

Similarly, Wall Street continued to rally based on the expectation of a Biden victory, thought to signify increased likelihood of a new federal bailout of big business along the lines of the bipartisan CARES Act passed last March by Congress.

Another indication of Trump’s increasing isolation was the absence of Vice President Mike Pence at the briefing, or any other significant figure in the Republican Party. After Trump’s adamant declaration, “If you count the legal votes, I easily win. If you count the illegal votes, they can try to steal the election from me,” no leading congressional Republican issued a statement of support.

While Trump in his remarks emphasized his campaign’s legal challenges to the vote counting, the initial results have not been promising. Judges in

Michigan and Georgia flatly rejected the Trump campaign's complaints about process violations. He offered not a scrap of evidence to back his charges of vote fraud. Failing to win support in the judiciary, Trump is appealing to sections of the fascist right to take action now to disrupt vote counting and prevent the official validation of his electoral defeat.

Georgia has a Republican governor and secretary of state, the chief administrator of the election process. In Pennsylvania, the majority of the counties now reporting mail ballot votes for Biden are Republican-controlled. Because of Trump's dismissal of coronavirus fears, Democratic voters predominate in the mail balloting, even in Republican counties.

Trump suggested, without offering any evidence, that large numbers of votes were being "dumped" into the system if they were for Biden and removed if they were for him. But at every level, both Democratic and Republican officials were involved in vote counting.

In Nevada and Arizona, where Biden has been in the lead, the demand of the Trump campaign has been to count the votes. In Pennsylvania and Georgia, where Trump had been in the lead until Friday, the demand was to "stop the count." This contradiction only underscores the cynical falsifications of the Trump campaign: count my votes, but not his.

In Nevada, where Biden now leads by 11,428 votes, a small number of votes were counted in Washoe County (Reno) and Clark County (Las Vegas), as well as in the thinly populated rural counties. This resulted in a net gain of about 3,500 votes for Biden. The bulk of the uncounted votes, some 51,000, are in Clark County, a Democratic stronghold, and these will be reported sometime Friday.

Only in Arizona is the Trump campaign gaining votes, after continued vote counting in Maricopa County (Phoenix), which accounts for 65 percent of the statewide total. But it was unclear whether Trump would win enough votes among the 400,000 uncounted votes to overcome Biden's 60,000-vote statewide lead.

In order to win in the Electoral College, Trump must win Pennsylvania (20), North Carolina (15), Georgia (16) and either Arizona (11) or Nevada (6). If the four states—besides North Carolina, which has postponed a final count until next week—fall to Biden, his Electoral College vote would reach 306, the same as Trump's total in 2016.

The focus on the Electoral College should not distract from acknowledging that Biden has already surpassed the previous record for the popular vote, set by Barack Obama in 2008, of 69.5 million. His vote total has already surpassed 73 million and is likely to approach 80 million votes once the late-counting, heavily Democratic West Coast states of California, Oregon and Washington are fully counted.

All the legal challenges issued by the Trump campaign to the vote-counting process so far have been rebuffed by the judiciary. A superior court judge in Georgia dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Trump campaign against vote counting in Savannah, Georgia. In Michigan, a state judge rejected a lawsuit filed by the Trump campaign over vote counting in Detroit.

The *New York Times* reported Thursday that Attorney General William Barr had sent a memo to federal attorneys suggesting that they had the power to send armed federal agents into vote-counting centers across the country to suppress fraud. But Trump made no reference to such measures in his remarks at the White House Thursday evening.



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