As Biden popular vote lead hits five million

Trump, Republicans continue campaign to overturn election

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Democratic President-elect Joe Biden increased his overall lead in the popular vote to more than five million Wednesday, with 77.4 million votes, the most ever won by a US presidential candidate, compared to 72.3 million votes for President Donald Trump.

Biden's percentage of the popular vote reached 50.8 percent, as more votes were counted in the heavily Democratic West Coast states, which allow late-arriving mail ballots as long as they were postmarked by November 3. His share of the popular vote is the highest for any candidate challenging an incumbent president since Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 landslide victory over Herbert Hoover, exceeding that of Ronald Reagan in 1980 (50.7 percent).

The former vice president maintained his leads in four closely contested states, with his margins actually increasing to 14,112 in Georgia, 36,726 in Nevada and 50,215 in Pennsylvania. Biden's lead in Arizona fell to 12,813, but nearly every ballot has been counted there and both Fox News and the Associated Press "called" the state for the Democrat on election night.

Victory in those four states would give Biden 306 electoral votes, compared to 232 for Trump, when the Electoral College assembles in various state capitals on December 14. That assumes Trump maintains his 70,000-vote lead in the remaining "uncalled" state, North Carolina, which is awaiting the counting of tens of thousands of provisional, mail-in and military ballots.

The scale of Biden's popular vote victory and his comfortable margin in the Electoral College—the same 306 electoral votes that Trump called a "landslide" when he hit that mark in 2016—only underscore the extraordinarily anti-democratic and ominous character of Trump's refusal to accept the outcome of the election. This intransigence has been backed by the vast majority of Republicans in the House and Senate, who have refused to acknowledge that Biden is president-elect.

Vote-counting, recanvassing and litigation continued in all the closely contested states Wednesday, with the Trump campaign failing to make any gains on the legal front. By one tabulation, Trump's advocates were 0 for 10 in court decisions and had so far been unable to convince a single judge to delay the certification of the results.

In Georgia, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, rejected demands from the state's two Republican senators that he resign for alleged faulty oversight of the voting, in which both Republican incumbents were forced into a January 5 runoff against Democratic challengers. Raffensperger said there would be a hand recount of the more than five million votes cast in the state, affecting both the presidential race and the two Senate contests.

In Arizona, the state attorney general, Republican Mark Brnovich, said Trump was "very, very unlikely" to win enough of the remaining uncounted ballots to overcome Biden's lead. "It does appear Joe Biden will win Arizona," he told Fox Business, saying there was no evidence of fraud or widespread irregularities in the voting or the vote-counting.

In Michigan, Republican challenges to vote-counting in suburban Oakland County, which Biden carried by a wide margin, were thrown out Tuesday. Overall, Trump's defeat in the state, by a sizeable 146,000 votes, came from a swing against him among white working class voters, particularly in the Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County suburbs, compared to 2016.

On Wednesday, the Trump campaign went to federal court seeking to bar the state from certifying Biden's victory in Michigan. The resort to federal rather than state courts is significant, since it indicates an intention to begin a chain of legal appeals that would take the issue to the US Supreme Court, where Trump has appointed three of the nine justices, including Amy Coney Barrett, confirmed and sworn in just before the election.

In the most critical state, Pennsylvania, whose 20 electoral

votes put Biden over the top in the Electoral College, a Republican lawsuit was heard in Montgomery County, in the Philadelphia suburbs, which went heavily for Biden. The hearing included the following remarkable exchange in court, between Judge Richard P. Haaz and Trump campaign lawyer Jonathan S. Goldstein, over 592 mail ballots being challenged by the Republicans.

THE COURT: I am asking you a specific question, and I am looking for a specific answer. Are you claiming that there is any fraud in connection with these 592 disputed ballots?

MR. GOLDSTEIN: To my knowledge at present, no.

THE COURT: Are you claiming that there is any undue or improper influence upon the elector with respect to these 592 ballots?

MR. GOLDSTEIN: To my knowledge at present, no.

On Monday, the most sensational allegation of Trump's supporters in Pennsylvania, about systematic mail-ballot vote fraud in the city of Erie, collapsed when a postal worker who had come forward as a purported whistleblower admitted that his claims of ballot-stuffing were fabricated. The postal worker had received $130,000 in donations from right-wing sources before he made his admission. Senator Lindsey Graham, Attorney General William Barr and Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani had all cited this false account as the basis for charges of vote fraud.

It is increasingly clear that the purpose of the flurry of lawsuits filed by the Trump campaign is not to actually shift the results of the vote-counting, since there is no evidence of fraud and the number of ballots in question is too small to affect the outcome. The aim is to discredit the vote-counting as a pretext for Republican-controlled state legislatures in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia and Arizona to step in and name slates of pro-Trump electors, rather than the pro-Biden electors chosen by the voters.

There is tight timetable for Trump and his co-conspirators to engineer such an electoral coup in Michigan. Most Michigan counties have completed their mandatory recanvass of the balloting, and the state is on track to meet its November 17 deadline for certification of the vote. That would be followed by Biden electors assembling in the state capital, Lansing, to cast the state's 16 electoral votes.

Not counting the electoral votes of Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Nevada and Arizona, Biden would have 227 electoral votes and Trump 232, creating an illusion of parity. Actually, Biden is leading in all six states by a combined total of 280,000 votes.

Trump needs to block the certification of Biden's victory in at least four of these states in order to keep him below 270 in the Electoral College, or engineer the outright hijacking of electoral votes by the state legislatures, which are Republican-controlled in all but Nevada.

At least one state representative in Wisconsin, Republican Joe Sanfelippo, has endorsed the selection of Trump delegates for the Electoral College, setting aside the popular vote. He has been appointed by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos to a committee that is investigating the election results.

A group of Pennsylvania state representatives have backed a similar effort to steal that state's electoral votes, or at least delay certification of a Biden victory, required by November 23, but the Republican leader of the state Senate has so far disavowed it. That is why Trump recently tweeted about the need to elect a new leadership for the Republican caucus in the Pennsylvania legislature.

In both Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, the state legislatures would have to defy state laws that award the state's electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most support from state voters.

As Trump and the Republican Party are well aware, their greatest asset is the cowardice and duplicity of their political opponents, Biden and the Democratic Party. Biden is doing everything in his power to downplay the dictatorial character of Trump's moves, dismiss the danger to democratic rights, and politically disarm the population.

As the Socialist Equality Party (US) Political Committee explained in its statement ("Stop Trump's conspiracy to nullify the 2020 elections!") posted Wednesday on the *World Socialist Web Site*:

> The only viable response to the conspiracy being hatched in the White House is the demand for the immediate removal of Trump, Pence and their co-conspirators.
>
> This demand can be realized only through the independent intervention of the working class and the struggle to organize a nationwide political strike.

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