Trump campaign presses demands to suppress millions of votes

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In a further escalation of its open assault on democratic rights, the Trump reelection campaign is now demanding that millions of ballots for Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden be suppressed in order to give Trump the electoral votes of a half dozen states.

These demands make it clear that Trump's continuing refusal to concede Biden's victory in the November 3 election is part of a continuing conspiracy against the American people. Side by side with his ongoing silence on the coronavirus catastrophe—Trump has said nothing for the last eight days while more than one million Americans have been infected and thousands have died—Trump is whipping up fascistic forces in an effort to steal the election.

In Pennsylvania, the most critical state from the standpoint of the Electoral College, since it has the most electoral votes of the six states where the Trump campaign is seeking to overturn Biden victories, Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani claimed that 650,000 "unlawful ballots" were cast and counted in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, the two largest cities in the state.

He told Fox News that up to 900,000 "invalid ballots" were cast across the entire state, nearly 15 percent of the 6.8 million votes cast in the election. Giuliani did not, of course, provide any evidence of vote fraud, and the irregularities actually cited by attorneys for the Trump campaign amount to only a tiny number of ballots, far below Biden's margin in the state of more than 50,000 votes.

In Michigan, where Biden won by a comparatively huge margin, 148,000 votes, the Trump campaign has filed multiple lawsuits seeking an even larger disenfranchisement of the population for having voted the "wrong" way.

A suit filed in the US District Court for the Western District of Michigan, in Lansing, demanded the disqualification of every ballot cast in Wayne County, the state's most populous, including the city of Detroit; in Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), and Ingham County (Lansing and East Lansing). This comes to the staggering total of 1.2 million votes, or nearly one quarter of the 5.4 million votes in the state. Eliminating those votes would give Trump a margin of 300,000 in the rest of the state and Michigan's 16 electoral votes.

The principal allegation in the suit is that Republican ballot observers were spoken to rudely or compelled to observe social distancing and kept more than six feet away from the election workers doing the actual opening of mail ballots and their tabulation. No evidence of actual illegal voting or ballot stuffing is provided, only claims based on "expert reports" and data analysis.

"Upon information and belief, the expert report will identify persons who cast votes illegally by casting multiple ballots, were deceased, had moved, or were otherwise not qualified to vote in the November 3 presidential election, along with evidence of illegal ballot stuffing, ballot harvesting, and other illegal voting," the lawsuit states.

On this threadbare basis, the four plaintiffs propose to disenfranchise 1.2 million people, claiming because in those locations "where sufficient illegal ballots were included" the effect was to cause the ballots of people in other counties to be "diluted."

A second lawsuit, filed in Wayne County Circuit Court against Wayne County and Detroit election officials, proposes an even more grandiose exercise in disenfranchisement: suppressing the Michigan vote entirely, and ordering the state to conduct an entirely new election.

Whatever the legal prospects for these suits—and every Trump lawsuit has been denied or thrown out by the courts, with the exception of a single technical issue in Pennsylvania affecting a few hundred votes—the sheer scale of the disenfranchisement proposed is breathtaking. What the Trump campaign really means is that it should be illegal to vote against Trump.

These suits are being filed even as the scale of Biden's victory in terms of the popular vote begins to become even clearer. By one measure—the share of eligible voters supporting him—Biden has reached landslide territory, since the voter turnout in 2020 reached records not seen in a century in terms of the proportion of the population voting.

At his current 50.8 percent of the vote, by one calculation, Biden has 34.04 percent of all eligible voters. This is the largest figure since 1972, in Richard Nixon's 49-state landslide over George McGovern. If his percentage increases to 51 or 52, which is quite likely given the delays in counting mail ballots on the West Coast, which is heavily Democratic, he will end up matching the 34.17 percent of eligible voters achieved by

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Lyndon Johnson in his rout of Barry Goldwater.

While Biden leads by five million in the popular vote, his leads in the six states under challenge are sizeable, ranging from just under 12,000 in Arizona to the 148,000 in Michigan. According to one study of all statewide recounts conducted in the last 20 years, the largest vote swing was less than 2,600 votes, and the average shift was only 430 votes.

Given these figures, the continued refusal of Trump to concede the election and the continued allegations of fraud by his campaign become more and more provocative. As the SEP Political Committee warned two days ago, "the working class cannot be indifferent to the efforts to overthrow an elected government by a right-wing and neo-fascist conspiracy."

There were signs Thursday of divisions within the Republican Party over how far to go in support of Trump's campaign to discredit the election and delegitimize a Biden administration. Ohio Governor Mike DeWine became the first Republican governor of a state won by Trump to admit the obvious, that Biden is the president-elect. Only Republican governors of Democratic states like Maryland, Massachusetts and Vermont had made such statements before.

A handful of Republican House members have made similar statements, but the number of Republican senators who have acknowledged Biden's victory remained at four—Mitt Romney, Ben Sasse of Nebraska, Susan Collins of Maine, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

However, a sizeable group of Republican senators, speaking individually, announced their support for such token measures as giving Biden access to the Presidential Daily Brief, an intelligence summary, and other materials necessary for a presidential transition.

They cited "national security" concerns, indicating that in the event Biden enters the White House, he should be aware of whom the US military-intelligence apparatus is planning to kill, subvert or overthrow, so that there is no disruption to ongoing operations. Biden is a trusted member of the national-security elite as the former vice president in the Obama administration.

There have also been pro-Biden signals from sections of the Republican media, not merely Fox News, which has openly clashed with Trump, but from the Las Vegas newspaper owned by billionaire Trump supporter Sheldon Adelson, which published an editorial advising the president to accept his defeat, and from numerous Republican pundits.

Leading congressional Democrats continued to downplay the significance of Trump's refusal to concede the election, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi dismissing Trump's efforts as "ridiculous shenanigans," at a press briefing Thursday on Capitol Hill.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, speaking at the same press briefing, made a longer critique of Trump and the congressional Republicans, but without drawing any broader political conclusions.

"This morning I have a simple message for Senate Republicans," he said. "The election is over, it wasn't close. Trump lost, Joe Biden will be the next president of the United States, Kamala Harris will be the next vice president of the United States. Senate Republicans, stop denying reality. Stop deliberately sowing doubt about our democratic process and start focusing on COVID."

He concluded, "Let us bring the country together and get things done," without addressing the obvious fact, staring the American public in the face, that Trump and his supporters have launched a direct attack on democracy.

From an electoral standpoint, the critical step would be the intervention of state legislatures in the states under challenge, because five out of six are Republican-controlled, and the legislators could potentially take action to hijack the state's electoral votes. Republican state legislative leaders in Pennsylvania and Michigan, the two largest "battleground" states won by Biden, have said they would not intervene, but they may be challenged by Trump diehards within their caucuses.

From the standpoint of Trump's preparation of a political coup, the attitude of the military and security agencies is of decisive importance. Earlier this week, Trump fired Defense Secretary Mark Esper and three other officials and replaced them with ultra-right loyalists.

On Thursday, the purge extended to the Department of Homeland Security, although here the issue appeared to be simple retaliation against those who had undercut Trump's claims of vote fraud. Bryan Ware, assistant director of cybersecurity for the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) was forced to resign, and his supervisor, Chris Krebs, the director of the CISA, said he expected to be fired as well.

The CISA vigorously combated false claims on the internet that supercomputers were being used to "flip" vote totals during the election tabulations in critical states. On Thursday, Krebs retweeted an election technology specialist who warned people not to share "wild and baseless claims about voting machines, even if they're made by the president."

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