

Trump holds White House meeting with Michigan Republicans in bid to overturn Biden victory

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More than two weeks after the November 3 election, President Donald Trump and the Republican Party continue to refuse to accept the results of the presidential vote. Nor can it be assumed that they ultimately will.

Instead, Trump is escalating his efforts to nullify the election and establish a presidential dictatorship.

His campaign is continuing to file baseless lawsuits aimed at overturning clear victories for Democrat Joe Biden in the key swing states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada, despite the fact that virtually all of the two dozen previously filed cases have been tossed out by the courts.

But his focus has now shifted to directly intervening with Republican election officials and state legislators in the various states to block the certification of the vote tallies. There is no precedent for such an effort, clearly unconstitutional, by a sitting president to overturn the results of an election and remain in power.

The intention is to string out the process past the December 8 “safe harbor” date, after which there can be no legal challenges to the official vote tallies of the various states, so that Republican-led state legislatures can attempt to nullify the popular vote and choose their own, pro-Trump slates of electors. By statute, on December 14 the electors are required to meet in each state capital and officially vote for the winning candidate.

If slates of electors were contested, the election could be thrown into the House of Representatives, or it could end up going to the US Supreme Court. If the House were to decide, the Republicans would have the advantage, since each state delegation gets one vote and the Republicans control more delegations than the Democrats. As for the Supreme Court, with the addition of far-right Trump appointee Amy Coney Barrett, the court is stacked six to three with right-wing Republicans.

However, the broad mass of the American people will not accept the flagrant overturning of an election and nullification of tens of millions of votes. The logic of the political crisis leads inevitably to civil war. Even were a resolution to the

immediate crisis to be patched together, it would only establish the conditions for the next stage of the collapse of American democracy.

On Friday, Georgia certified Biden’s win in that state, with its 16 electoral votes, after a hand recount only slightly reduced Biden’s margin of victory, leaving him with a lead of nearly 12,300 votes. Republican Governor Brian Kemp has until 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time Saturday to sign the papers finalizing the certification.

With Michigan (16 electoral votes) required to certify its election results on Monday, Trump has intervened to block the certification. In that state, all 83 counties have certified the election, which Biden won by more than 154,000 votes.

The Board of State Canvassers, composed of two Republicans and two Democrats, is set to meet in the state capital Lansing and officially certify the result. However, one of the two Republicans on the panel has indicated he might withhold his vote and call for a delay pending further investigation of alleged irregularities.

On Friday, Trump held an extraordinary meeting at the White House with Republican leaders of the GOP-controlled Michigan legislature. The White House offered no explanation of the nature of the meeting and issued no statement after it concluded.

The Republican delegation was led by Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield, and also included Representatives Jason Wentworth and Jim Lilly and Senators Tom Barrett, Dan Lauwers, and Aric Nesbitt. Wentworth will be the speaker of the House in 2021 when Chatfield leaves due to term limits.

After the meeting, Shirkey and Chatfield issued a statement saying: “We have not yet been made aware of any information that would change the outcome of the election in Michigan and, as legislative leaders, we will follow the law and follow the normal process regarding Michigan’s electors, just as we have said throughout this election.” They added that the candidates “who win the most votes win elections and Michigan’s electoral votes.”

The White House meeting followed Trump’s intervention

earlier this week in an attempt to block the certification of the presidential vote in Wayne County, which includes Detroit. On Tuesday, the two Republicans on the county's four-person canvassers' board initially refused to certify the election results, which heavily favored Biden. Later that evening, they reversed themselves in the face of an outpouring of angry denunciations by Detroit voters and agreed to certify the results.

Trump then telephoned the Republican chair of the board, after which she and her fellow Republican filed affidavits declaring their desire to reverse their votes to certify, something for which there is evidently no legal sanction.

Trump's focus, at least initially, on Michigan is not accidental. Last month, the FBI and Michigan authorities arrested 13 men in connection with an active plot to kidnap and kill Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Those arrested were linked to fascist militia groups that organized armed protests last spring in Lansing against the governor's COVID-19 lockdown orders. Trump hailed the protests at the time, tweeting "Liberate Michigan!"

Over the weekend, Trump's top coronavirus adviser, Dr. Scott Atlas, denounced new restrictions imposed by Whitmer, tweeting that Michiganders should "rise up" against the governor. Senate Majority Leader Shirkey associated himself with the anti-lockdown protests and was photographed last spring speaking with two of the militiamen at a Lansing rally who were subsequently charged in the Whitmer murder plot.

The fascistic character of Trump's election coup operation was underscored on Thursday by a press conference headed up by Trump's lead lawyer Rudy Giuliani. In a 45-minute tirade, Giuliani claimed that the election was stolen from Trump as the result of a centrally organized nationwide conspiracy that included the Venezuelan government, China and George Soros. Giuliani described the Jewish billionaire as "the biggest donor to the Democrat Party, the biggest donor to Antifa and the biggest donor to Black Lives Matter."

Another of Trump's lawyers, Sidney Powell, said, "What we are really dealing with here and uncovering more by the day is the massive influence of communist money through Venezuela, Cuba and likely China in the interference with our elections here in the United States."

Following Giuliani's press conference, Democratic House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer denounced Trump's efforts to pressure Republican election officials and legislators into blocking the certification of voting results in battleground states won by Biden, saying, "I think this borders on treason."

This frank assessment, however, is the exception that proves the rule of the Democratic response. President-elect Joe Biden has refused to characterize Trump's actions as an attempted coup, downplaying the immense danger of dictatorship and instead seeking to spread complacency and passivity. At his press conference Thursday, the furthest Biden would go was to call Trump's actions "irresponsible."

He has repeatedly pleaded with Republican leaders to stop supporting Trump's subversion and pledged to work with the Republicans in a Biden administration. At the same time, he has made clear his basic agreement with Trump's "herd immunity" policy in regard to the coronavirus pandemic. On Thursday, he signaled his support for the back-to-work and back-to-school drives that are infecting and killing thousands of working people in order to keep the profits rolling in for the corporate elite.

In the face of exploding cases and deaths from the virus, which is spreading out of control, he went out of his way to reject the only policy, along with massive relief for the unemployed and vast resources for health care, that can stop the slaughter, contain the pandemic and bring it under control.

"I'm not going to shut down the economy period," he declared. "And let me say that again. No national shutdown... there is no circumstance that I can see that would require a total national shutdown."

Barack Obama, interviewed Thursday night on MSNBC, was asked, "I've heard the word 'coup' used to describe these types of efforts. Is that hyperbolic, or is our democracy under a realistic threat here?"

He began his response by assuring one and all that "Joe Biden is going to be the next president of the United States." He then spoke of "attempts to block, negate, overturn the people's vote when there's no actual evidence that there was anything illegal or fraudulent taking place."

While Trump and the Republicans continue their efforts to overthrow the election, in the process working to build a fascist movement and destabilize a Biden administration, should one eventually come to power, the Democrats downplay the crisis and work to politically disarm the working class.

The central lesson that must be drawn is the necessity for the working class to break from the Democratic Party and mobilize its independent strength to block the drive by substantial sections of the corporate-financial oligarch to establish a dictatorship.



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