

State Republican parties close ranks behind Trump

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In the wake of former President Donald Trump's February 13 acquittal in his second impeachment trial, state Republican parties have reaffirmed their allegiance to the would-be dictator.

Emboldened by the Democrats' feckless impeachment trial, which shielded Trump's Republican co-conspirators in Congress as well as his abettors in the military, the police and on Wall Street, state Republican parties are advancing motions to punish those few Republican lawmakers who voted for Trump's impeachment or Senate conviction.

Out of the 57 senators who voted to convict, only seven were Republicans, resulting in acquittal since conviction requires a two-thirds margin, or 67 votes. Almost all of the seven Republicans who voted against Trump are facing censure by their state parties.

In North Carolina, the state party met Monday night to formally censure Senator Richard Burr. Burr, who has generally backed Trump, was among the 46 Republican senators who voted earlier in the five-day trial to quash the proceedings on the legally specious grounds that it is unconstitutional to impeach and convict a president who is no longer in office. Nevertheless, on Saturday he joined six other Republicans to cast a "guilty" vote against the ex-president.

State party chairman Michael Whatley condemned Burr's vote, calling it "shocking and disappointing." Burr has already indicated that he will not seek reelection in 2022, leading to speculation that Trump's daughter-in-law Lara Trump, a native of North Carolina and wife of Eric Trump, will run for Burr's seat.

In Utah, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported Monday that a draft is circulating among state Republicans seeking to censure Mitt Romney for his "guilty" vote. Indicative of the far-right forces that control much of the party apparatus, the petition asserts that Romney "appears to be an agent for the Establishment Deep State."

On Saturday, immediately following the conclusion of the Senate trial, the Louisiana GOP censured Senator Bill Cassidy after he voted to convict Trump. The Louisiana

party issued a statement announcing the censure vote and stating: "We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the vote today by Sen. Cassidy to convict former President Trump."

Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse is likewise facing a censure vote. The vote was temporarily put on hold due to the debilitating ice storm that blanketed much of the US over the weekend. The measure from the State Central Committee of the Nebraska Republican Party excoriates Sasse for statements he made after the attempted coup of January 6 in which he accused Trump of inciting the riot at the Capitol and of "lying to the American people."

The measure also condemns Sasse for "defamatory public statements" against Republican Senators Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz, both of whom promoted Trump's lying claims of election fraud and voted to overturn the results of the election after the insurrection at the Capitol.

Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey, who has also announced he will not seek reelection, was censured by multiple county GOP committees for voting to convict Trump. Republican committees in Lawrence, Washington, York, and Centre County all voted to censure Toomey over the past week. In a February 13 statement, state GOP chair Lawrence Tabas said the acquittal of Trump was the "constitutionally correct outcome."

In line with the constant appeals of the Biden administration and the Democrats for "bipartisan unity" with the party of the fascistic ex-president, Tabas concluded his statement by declaring, "I hope that we can now turn our attention to opening our schools..."

In Maine, the *Bangor Daily News* reported that Maine GOP Chair Demi Kouzounas intends to censure Senator Susan Collins by the end of the month. In an email to party members this past weekend, Kouzounas wrote that "many of you are upset after what happened today as are we."

The wave of censure motions is a continuation of the consolidation of state Republican parties behind Trump that has followed the January 6 assault on the Capitol. Within days of the attack, several Republican state and county

organizations released statements or posted comments on their social media pages either endorsing the coup or denying the role of Trump and his co-conspirators within the party in organizing the insurrection.

In Nevada, Nye County Republican Party Chairman Chris Zimmerman wrote a Facebook post two days after the coup attempt asserting, “Trump will be president for another four years,” and “we will have a new administration made up of a new vice president and cabinet, as the current ones have all made their treason complete.”

The post warned of mass arrests and disruptions in telecommunications systems, and alleged that “we are in a battle for our republic against elites that are attempting the very coup that they are accusing Trump of doing.” Zimmerman justified the letter to local media, telling Fox 5 that there was nothing “seditious” about the letter.

After 10 Republican House members voted to impeach Trump last month, Oregon state Republican Party Chairman Bill Currier released a statement on January 19 “condemning the betrayal” of the Republican representatives who supported impeachment “without any investigation, hearing, shred of due process, and in contradiction to the known and emerging facts.”

John Kraft, chairman of the St. Croix County Republican Party in Wisconsin, took down and then uploaded a newly redesigned version of the county organization’s website after it was discovered by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* last month that the page advised members to “prepare for war.”

In an archived version of the website dated January 7, Kraft echoed the language of the Boogaloo militia members who plotted to kidnap and assassinate Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer last year, writing: “We need to start local by eliminating leftist tyrants from all local and County positions in the upcoming April election.”

Two days after the coup attempt, the head of the Texas GOP, Allen West, posed with militia members outside the Texas Capitol on the opening day of the legislature. West has consistently defended Trump and appealed to violent fascists. Last July, he changed the motto of the state party to “We are the Storm”—an overture to the fascistic QAnon conspiracy theory, which uses the phrase to describe the mass execution of Trump’s enemies.

In Michigan, state Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey, who was censured last month by the state party for not “upholding conservative values,” recanted an earlier apology he had made after a video came to light in which he characterized the January 6 coup attempt as a “hoax from day one.”

In tandem with their consolidation behind Trump, Republican state parties are advancing measures to limit

voting in the upcoming 2022 election. Central to Trump’s fabricated claims of a “rigged election” was his attack on the use of mail-in and absentee ballots. The use of these ballots increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mail balloting is being targeted in most of the measures being introduced by Republican-controlled state legislatures.

A recent analysis by the Brennan Center for Justice found that state legislatures had introduced four times the number of bills meant to restrict voting as had been introduced by this time last year.

As of the first week of February, the Brennan Center found that 33 states had “introduced, prefilled, or carried over 165 restrictive bills this year,” compared to only 35 last year. “Restrictive bills” include measures that would limit mail voting access, impose stricter voter ID requirements, slash voter registration opportunities or enable more aggressive purging of registered voters from the rolls.

The Republican-controlled legislature in Arizona, a state that went for Trump in 2016 but was won by Biden last November, leads the nation in measures attacking voting rights. It has introduced 19 restrictive bills. It is followed by Pennsylvania with 14, Georgia with 11 and New Hampshire with 10.

Examples of legislation under consideration include Missouri Bill SB 282, which would eliminate COVID-19 as a valid reason for obtaining a mail-in ballot. Similar proposals are under consideration in Arizona, Georgia, North Dakota and Oklahoma.

The Brennan Center found that so far this year, 18 states have advanced 40 measures seeking to impose new or more stringent voter ID requirements, such as accepting only a state ID from the state where one is voting, or requiring voters to mail a photocopy of government ID along with an absentee ballot. Ten states that previously had no voter ID requirement are currently considering legislation to impose one.

In Pennsylvania, where Trump’s efforts to throw out the votes of nearly seven million people failed in the courts, the GOP is seeking to remedy the problem of too many people voting by gerrymandering the state Supreme Court, which is currently in the control of the Democratic Party.



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