

House Homeland Security Committee announces agreement on bipartisan commission to investigate January 6 coup attempt

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On Friday, the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Benny Thompson (Democrat-Mississippi), and the top Republican on the committee, John Katko (New York), released a statement announcing that an agreement had been reached to “introduce legislation to form a bipartisan, independent Commission to investigate the January 6 domestic terrorism attack on the United States Capitol and recommend changes to further protect the Capitol.”

Thompson added in a separate statement: “There has been a growing consensus that the January 6th attack is of a complexity and national significance that what we [sic] need an independent commission to investigate. I am pleased that after many months of intensive discussion, Ranking Member Katko and I were able to reach a bipartisan agreement.”

Katko claimed that an “independent, bipartisan commission will remove politicization of the conversation and focus solely on the facts and circumstances surrounding the security breach at the Capitol as well as other instances of violence relevant to such a review.”

Katko was one of only 10 Republicans who voted to impeach Trump following the attempted coup. Explaining his vote at the time, he said: “It cannot be ignored that President Trump encouraged this insurrection.” Katko added that as the attack was underway, Trump “refused to call it off, putting countless lives in danger.”

The legislation, titled the National Commission to Investigate the January 6 Attack on the United States Capitol Complex Act (H.R. 3233), is expected to be considered by the House of Representatives as early as next week. However, there is no guarantee that the bill will pass the House, much less the evenly divided Senate, where a two-thirds majority would be required.

Given the fact that the Republican Party overwhelmingly continues to support Trump’s lying claims that the election was fraudulent and that nothing of significance happened on January 6, it is entirely possible that the proposal could be further amended to garner Republican support, or be dropped altogether.

On Friday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi indicated she would bring the legislation forward along with a \$1.8 billion “security”

package that includes funding to expand the US Capitol Police force, install retractable fencing around the Capitol and implement other recommendations included in retired Gen. Russel Honoré’s “Task Force 1–6 Assessment.”

Neither the proposed funding nor Honoré’s recommendations deal with the obvious and undeniable fact that frontline Capitol Police officers were sabotaged by their leadership in order to facilitate the attack on the Capitol.

The legislation agreed to by Katko and Thompson largely hews to the agreement Pelosi announced on April 22, which granted major concessions to the Republicans. The concessions to the demands of Trump’s Republican co-conspirators included altering the composition of the panel to give the Republicans 50–50 representation, with five members appointed by the Democratic chair and five named by the Republican co-chair. The evenly split panel would have the power to issue subpoenas only if they were approved by a majority of panel members and signed off by both the chair and the vice chair. In other words, the panel as defined in the House bill would give the Republicans veto power over its operations and conclusions.

A summary of the agreement distributed by the committee notes that the commissioners must have “significant expertise in the areas of law enforcement, civil rights, civil liberties, privacy, intelligence, and cybersecurity.” It continues: “Current government officers or employees are prohibited from appointment.”

On April 20, the *New York Times* published an editorial comment demanding that Pelosi accept key Republican demands so as to break an impasse in establishing the commission. The newspaper cited an April 8 open letter signed by former national security officials from both parties calling for the creation of a commission modeled on the supposedly “successful” 9/11 Commission. That body in fact failed to address substantial evidence indicating that high-level state officials ignored a series of warnings of an impending attack and may have facilitated the terror attacks that provided the justification for the “war on terror.”

Signatories to the open letter comprised a “who’s who” of government spymasters, Homeland Security officials and war

criminals responsible for eviscerating democratic rights within the US and launching neo-colonial wars in the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa that killed millions and destroyed entire societies. These trusted agents of the capitalist state will ensure that any “findings” the commission unearths will not implicate the agencies many of them spent their careers defending and serving.

Under conditions in which far-right members of the Republican Party continue to threaten violence against Democrats while purging and censoring any members of their party who refuse to adhere to Trump’s fascistic lies, Pelosi hailed the proposed agreement on Friday, releasing a statement saying that it is “imperative that we seek the truth of what happened on January 6 with an independent, bipartisan 9/11-type Commission to examine and report upon the facts, causes and security relating to the terrorist mob attack.”

The idea that a “bipartisan” commission is the only method to get to the truth of January 6 is patently absurd. Testifying to that reality, on the same day the commission agreement was announced, arch-conservative Liz Cheney was removed from her leadership position within the party in a secret vote at the behest of Trump.

Cheney, who has been promoted by the Democrats and the mainstream press for her refusal to adhere to Trump’s “Big Lie” of a stolen election, was replaced with New York Representative Elise Stefanik. In a Friday morning vote, Stefanik defeated ultra-right House Freedom Caucus member Chip Roy of Texas 134–46.

Roy ran to the right of Stefanik, who prior to her recent transformation into a Trump sycophant was a relatively “moderate” Republican, voting in line with Trump’s policies only 78 percent of the time, compared to 93 percent for Cheney, according to data compiled by FiveThirtyEight.

Demonstrating that the Republican Party has become an incubator for fascist forces, at a House Judiciary Committee hearing earlier this year held on the rise of violence against Asian Americans following the Atlanta spa shootings, Roy unleashed a racist tirade, claiming that violence and discrimination against Asian Americans was blown out of proportion.

Roy claimed that censorship was a bigger problem than hate-speech, while referring to the Chinese as “Chi-coms.” Roy invoked the legacy of lynch law in America and demanded that the government “find all the rope in Texas and get a tall Oak tree” and “take out the bad guys.”

At a Friday press conference, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy thanked Roy for running, saying it was a “good election.” McCarthy then expressed reservations about the commission proposal, telling reporters he would “look through it,” while complaining about the “scope” of the commission. “You’ve got to look at what the build-up before and what has gone on afterwards, otherwise the commission does not work,” he said.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, Katko said that McCarthy was still “looking” at the proposal and had not yet agreed to it. Asked by a reporter if he thought the Republican House leadership would have any problems with the proposal, Katko said, “I’ll see about it.”

Republican lawmakers, many of whom were deeply complicit and continue to support Trump’s coup, have argued in the months

following the attack on the Capitol that any commission would have to also include alleged violence committed by “antifa” and Black Lives Matter protesters during last year’s protest in response to police violence.

The demand to increase the scope of a January 6 commission to include alleged “left-wing violence” has been championed most vociferously by Republicans who played a leading role in Trump’s attempted coup, including “Stop the Steal” organizer Arizona Representative Andy Biggs. During a House hearing on Wednesday on the attack on the Capitol, Biggs used his time to defend indicted insurrectionist and Proud Boy Christopher Worrell, while spreading lies equating the storming of the Capitol with anti-police violence protests.

Joining Biggs in whitewashing the attempted coup were several Republicans who voted to overturn the election even after the storming of the Capitol. This includes Representatives Jim Jordan (Ohio), Paul Gosar (Arizona), Andrew Clyde and Jody Hice (Georgia).

Clyde described the attack on the Capitol, which left some 140 injured and five dead, a “normal tourist visit,” and said it was a “bald-faced lie” to describe the events of January 6 as an insurrection. Hice tried to say that the hundreds of militia members, neo-Nazis and white supremacists who marched on the Capitol did nothing wrong, claiming “they marched peacefully and patriotically to make their voices heard at the Capitol.”

The hearing marked the first congressional testimony by the Trump-appointed acting Secretary of Defense, who oversaw the stand down of National Guard troops despite repeated pleas from the commander of the DC National Guard and besieged lawmakers, including Vice President Mike Pence, for forces to be sent to clear the Capitol of fascistic militia forces seeking to kidnap and kill them. Trump’s Pentagon accomplice, Christopher Miller, arrogantly defended his role.

In the months following the attempted coup, the Democrats’ fecklessness, as demonstrated by the coalescing of the Republican Party around Trump’s “Big Lie,” has only emboldened Trump and the fascistic elements he represents within the financial oligarchy and state apparatus to continue their drive to eliminate what remains of democracy in the US in order to prosecute their shared class agenda of “herd immunity” at home and imperialist war abroad, principally against China.

As the WWSWS has previously explained, the proposed commission must be understood as an attempt by the Democrats to politically rehabilitate their “Republican colleagues,” while at the same time concealing the widespread support for Trump’s attempted coup, not only within the Republican Party, but throughout the upper echelons of the police, military and intelligence agencies that facilitated the attack on the Capitol.



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