

Fascist allies of Trump rally at Lansing, Michigan Capitol to demand “forensic audit” of 2020 election

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13 October 2021

On Tuesday, Republican allies of former president Donald Trump held a fascistic rally on the steps of the Lansing, Michigan Capitol to promote Trump’s conspiracy theory that the election was stolen and that President Joe Biden is illegitimate.

The event, dubbed by Trump in an October 8 statement the “Big Michigan Rally,” drew a crowd of roughly 300 supporters, including about a dozen current and aspiring Republican politicians. While the turnout was small, the presence of Republican officials underscored the continuing hold of the would-be Führer on the GOP.

Speakers at the event toed the line set by Trump, denouncing the election as fraudulent, without presenting any evidence. They touted their far-right credentials, proclaiming their adherence to “God, family, guns and country,” while denouncing public health measures such as masks and lockdowns as examples of “Marxism” and “socialism.”

WMMT News Channel 3 reported that in anticipation of the rally, Michigan State Police increased their presence at the Capitol building while several lawmakers avoided the area entirely. Unlike the anti-lockdown rally held in the same location on April 30 of last year, at which armed Boogaloo Boys and far-right militia men stormed the Capitol building, forcing lawmakers to seek cover, participants did not openly carry assault rifles or wear body armor.

This did not alter the fascistic character of the event. Many of the demonstrators were draped in American flags. Dozens of signs and flags were explicitly pro-Trump, with several denoting support for the III Percenter militia group and the QAnon conspiracy theory. One of the speakers, Michigan State

Representative Daire Rendon from Lake City, wore a button that “featured an American Flag with a gold ‘Q’ on it,” according to the *Detroit News*.

Asked by a *Detroit News* reporter what the button represented, Rendon said, “The ‘Q’ is the highest level of security in the federal government.” During her speech on the Capitol steps she implied that voting machines were “accessible” and susceptible to hacking, and questioned why others did not see the “evidence” of fraud.

County election officials and clerks in Michigan have conducted over 250 audits since the 2020 election. All have affirmed that Joe Biden won the state by over 154,000 votes, or 3.0 percent, and there was no evidence of significant voter fraud.

The day after the Lansing rally, on Wednesday, Trump released a statement threatening to support primary challenges against Michigan Republicans who do not support yet another audit.

“Why won’t they give respected professionals and representatives at yesterday’s rally the right to do a Forensic Audit of Wayne County (Detroit) and Macomb County?” Trump demanded in his statement.

He continued: “That includes the RINOs [Republicans In Name Only] in the State Senate and House, who, for whatever reason, do nothing but obstruct instead of seeking the truth. Hopefully, each one of these cowardly RINOs, whose names will be identified and forthcoming, will be primaried, with my Complete and Total Endorsement, in the upcoming election.”

The rally was organized by a group calling itself the “Election Integrity Force,” an opaque non-profit formed by “concerned Michigan citizens” in 2020.

Speakers included Michigan State Representative Steve Carra from Three Rivers. Cara was endorsed by Trump and is seeking to primary US Representative Fred Upton, (St. Joseph), one of a select few congressional Republicans who voted to impeach Trump.

Other state reps speaking at the event included Matt Maddock (Milford) and John Reilly (Oakland). Trump-endorsed candidate for state attorney general Matthew DePerno, former State Senator Patrick Colbeck, and Melissa Carone, a candidate for the Michigan State House of Representatives, also spoke.

Carone briefly worked for Dominion Voting Systems and was the key witness in the Trump campaign's efforts to prove fraud in Michigan. However, her bizarre and lying testimony, given alongside Trump's personal lawyer and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, proved the opposite.

"Michigan is being led by a bunch of communists," Carone said at the rally. "That's (Governor Gretchen) Whitmer. That's (Secretary of State Jocelyn) Benson. That's (Attorney General Dana) Nessel. And if we don't get rid of them, we're totally screwed."

This is particularly sinister given the plot hatched by Michigan militia members, including some who stormed the state Capitol in April of 2020, to kidnap and likely murder Whitmer, which was exposed by the FBI and state authorities in early October of 2020. Fourteen men were arrested and jailed, six of whom were charged by the federal government and eight by state prosecutors.

Republican gubernatorial candidates Garret Soldano and Ryan Kelley also attended the rally. Kelley, who has donated thousands of dollars to Republican candidates, organized the April 30, 2020 rally at the Capitol in Lansing and the "Well-Regulated Militia" American Patriot Council (APC) rally in Lansing on June 27, 2020 to protest coronavirus restrictions and "government tyranny." He is one of the founders of the APC, which circulated a petition last year calling for the arrest of Whitmer, Nessel and Benson.

At his June 27, 2020 event, Kelley invited militia members to openly carry weapons. William Null, a Wolverine Watchmen currently on trial in the kidnapping plot against Whitmer, was one of Kelley's guests. Kelley is on video participating in the storming of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. He has yet to be

charged or arrested for any of these crimes.

In an interview with *State News* on Tuesday, Kelley claimed that "the entire election was invalid," and called for a "redo" of the "entire election in Michigan in a legal manner."

At Tuesday's rally, the Trump-endorsed candidate for state attorney general, Matthew DePerno, vowed that if elected he would "ensure elections are free of fraud and corruption." DePerno denounced "mask mandates, crippling shutdowns" and "corrupt politicians." He promised to "end" all public health measures meant to stem the spread of the pandemic, as well as "critical race theory."

"We need an army to fight," said DePerno. "We love God, family and country. We won't sit back and let these Marxists and socialists dictate our lives. We need to fight back now."



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