

# At Texas rally, Trump promises to pardon January 6 militia foot soldiers if reelected

Jacob Crosse  
31 January 2022

At a campaign-style rally Saturday night in Conroe, Texas, located 40 miles north of Houston, former President Donald Trump pledged to pardon those facing charges for storming the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, in an attempt to overthrow the election of Joe Biden.

"If I run and if I win, we will treat those people from January 6 fairly," Trump told the crowd at the "Save America" event. "And if it requires pardons, we will give them pardons because they are being treated so unfairly."

This pledge to pardon the violent mob that laid siege to the Capitol and nearly succeeded in capturing and possibly killing Democratic lawmakers in order to block congressional certification of Biden's election victory marks a new step in Trump's embrace of the attempted coup. Trump has repeatedly declared Biden's victory—by a wide margin—a "stolen election" and the "real insurrection," while portraying the attack on Congress, led by fascist militia paramilitaries, as a justified popular protest.

A large majority of the Republican Party has followed suit, as evidenced by the lineup of top Texas Republicans who appeared alongside Trump at Saturday's event. Six days before the Texas rally, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich told Fox News that members of the House Select Committee investigating the January 6 coup were criminals and would face imprisonment if the Republicans regained control of Congress.

"I think when you have a Republican Congress, this is all going to come crashing down and the wolves will find out that they are now sheep," Gingrich told the far-right host of the Sunday talk show, Maria Bartiromo.

Trump's talk of pardoning the insurrectionists came on top of his by now routine litany of fascist

incitements and falsehoods concerning immigrants, the coronavirus pandemic and the 2020 presidential election.

Of the over 725 people charged so far in participating in Trump's failed coup, at least 64 hail from Texas. The founder and leader of the Oath Keepers militia group, Stewart Rhodes, is one of 11 members of the militia group facing 20-year sentences after being charged with seditious conspiracy for their role in the siege of the Capitol. Rhodes was arrested earlier this month at his home in Granbury, Texas, some four hours north of Conroe.

Trump's pledge to pardon militia members, who formed the bulk of the paramilitary elements in the attempted coup, follows his embrace of Air Force veteran and QAnon adherent Ashli Babbitt. Babbitt was shot and killed by police while trying to breach the interior of the Capitol on January 6.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has drawn attention to Trump's promotion of Babbitt. A student of Adolf Hitler's speeches, Trump mirrors Hitler's promotion of Horst Wessel, a Nazi stormtrooper who was killed in a clash with Communist Party members and proclaimed a martyr of the Third Reich.

In the course of his rambling, more than hour-long rant, Trump also threatened to go after prosecutors in Atlanta and New York who have been investigating his past criminal activity.

"If these radical, vicious, racist prosecutors do anything wrong or illegal, I hope we are going to have in this country the biggest protest we have ever had in Washington D.C., in New York, in Atlanta and elsewhere," he said, "because our country and our elections are corrupt."

Last week in Georgia, Fulton County Superior Court judges approved Fulton County District Attorney Fani

Willis' request to seat a special grand jury to be charged with gathering evidence in pursuit of possible criminal charges related to Trump's efforts to muscle Georgia officials into overthrowing Biden's victory in the state.

In New York, recent court filings by Attorney General Letitia James have revealed massive levels of criminality and fraud at the center of the Trump business empire. Had a common worker attempted to engage in anything like the tax fraud and chicanery on which Trump based his unearned wealth, he or she would already have been charged and imprisoned decades ago.

Trump's pledges to pardon his insurrectionists and go after his political and legal enemies are part of his and the ruling class's ongoing efforts to cultivate a fascist movement in the United States through the Republican Party. More than two years into the pandemic, which has thoroughly discredited the capitalist system in the eyes of millions, the ruling class, unable to resolve the contradictions of the capitalist system or provide a progressive solution, increasingly turns to fascism and war in a desperate attempt to extricate itself from its myriad of crises.

That Trump's words are the dominant position of the Republican Party was made clear by the audience at Trump's rally. It included dozens of Texas Republican politicians, including Governor Greg Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Attorney General Ken Paxton, former Governor Rick Perry and US House members Louie Gohmert, Ronnie Jackson and Kevin Brady.

However, it was not only Texas politicians who made the trip to Conroe. Trump thanked attorney generals Eric Schmitt (Missouri), Leslie Rutledge (Arkansas), Todd Rokita (Indiana) and Jason Ravnsborg (South Dakota) for making the trip and supporting his fascistic agenda.

While the skyrocketing coronavirus death toll was omitted from virtually all of the Sunday morning talk shows, Trump's pledge to pardon his far-right foot soldiers did come up briefly on a few programs.

On CBS's *Face the Nation*, South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Trump sycophant, said he did not want "to send any signals that it was OK to defile the Capitol," but refused to denounce Trump, instead calling his remarks "inappropriate."

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, a "moderate"

Republican who voted to convict Trump in the Senate impeachment trial that followed the January 6 attack, refused to affirm that she would not support Trump were he to be nominated by the GOP in 2024.

In an appearance Sunday on ABC's *This Week* program, Collins said Trump should not "have made that pledge to do pardons. We should let the judicial process proceed." But when asked by host George Stephanopoulos why she would not "rule out supporting" Trump in 2024, Collins deflected, saying:

"Well, certainly it's not likely given the many other qualified candidates that we have that have expressed interest in running. So it's very unlikely."

As the Republicans coalesce around Trump's fascist movement, the Democratic-controlled US House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack meekly continues to subpoena figures connected to Trump's multi-faceted coup attempt.

On Friday, the committee issued 14 subpoenas to Republicans from seven states who participated in the scheme by fraudulently filing as electors, even though their states had voted for Biden and whose elector slates had been certified by state election officials. Earlier this month, the committee subpoenaed Rudy Giuliani and three other Trump lawyers who, among other things, oversaw the effort to pressure Republican-controlled state legislatures in swing states won by Biden to override the certified elector slates and instead authorize pro-Trump slates.

All of those subpoenaed by the committee last Friday listed themselves on the fraudulent filing as either the "chair" or "secretary" of the fake elector slate. Those subpoenaed include Nevada Republican Party Chairman Michael McDonald and the chair of the Georgia Republican Party, David Shafer.

Also subpoenaed was Jewell Powdrell from New Mexico. In an interview with the *Albuquerque Journal*, Powdrell said he signed his name to the fake slate at the insistence of former Republican Rep. Steve Pearce, the current leader of the New Mexico Republican Party.



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