

Republican lawmakers meet with leaders of far-right ‘People’s Convoy’ in Washington

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Despite their small numbers and unpopular message, leaders of the far-right anti-vaccine “People’s Convoy” have been regularly meeting with Republican lawmakers since arriving in Washington D.C. earlier this month.

Seeking to emulate the occupation of downtown Ottawa last month by right-wing “Freedom Convoy” truckers, the “People’s Convoy” that descended on Washington D.C. in early March has to date failed to make a similar impact.

This is in part because President Joe Biden and Democratic governors across the country have adopted wholesale the anti-scientific demands of the caravan, including eliminating mask mandates even as thousands continue to die every week and a new surge of infections looms, propelled by the BA.2 subvariant of Omicron.

While there is little support in the general population for the convoy, it has substantial support in the corporate ruling elite. Since arriving outside the capital in the first week of March, the caravan of owner-operator truckers, Republican operatives, far-right militia elements and anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists has been given demonstrative support by prominent Republicans. Its leaders have met with nearly a dozen Republican lawmakers.

The convoy, despite causing multiple accidents on interstate highways outside the capital, has been afforded police escorts every day this week. This has enabled it to block or delay traffic while honking horns and displaying American flags and pro-Trump, anti-Biden placards. Beginning last Monday, in an attempt to prevent elements of the convoy from making it into Washington D.C. proper, police have blocked certain interstate exits, leading to more traffic congestion.

For local residents, the convoy is exacerbating

already abysmal driving conditions. In a viral tweet posted on Wednesday, one Washington D.C. resident lamented that the convoy caused her to be “late to an important doctor’s appointment.” She claimed that a truck driver blocked her path and interrogated her, letting her pass only “... if I swore to him that my appointment wasn’t for an abortion.”

As the ruling class, in interests of profit, has abandoned nearly all pandemic mitigation measures, leading to over 150,000 more deaths since the start of 2022, the convoy has shrunk from roughly 2,000 participants to about 500. But the group continues to camp out at the Hagerstown Speedway on the outskirts of the capital.

Its leaders, including co-organizer Brian Brase, continue to be greeted by Republican lawmakers who were, to one degree or another, complicit in former President Donald Trump’s failed fascist coup of January 6, 2021.

On March 8, Brase and other convoy leaders met with US Sens. Ron Johnson (Wisconsin) and Ted Cruz (Texas), as well as Reps. Thomas Massie (Kentucky), Matt Gaetz (Florida) and Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia). During her meeting with Brase, Greene called Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a “dictator” and boasted that she was not vaccinated and was against “all” vaccine mandates.

On March 10, Cruz, one of seven Republican senators to vote against certifying the election of Biden following the January 6, 2021, fascist attack on the Capitol, spoke at the Hagerstown Speedway and participated in a ride-along. In his speech, he thanked the sparse crowd for “standing up for freedom,” while he denounced “idiot politicians who shut down small businesses.”

The following day, Cruz promoted the convoy on

social media, sharing an interview he did with Sean Hannity on Fox News. “I rode in the lead rig. We headed straight to the Capitol in D.C. It was inspirational,” Cruz told Hannity.

The “People’s Convoy” is a reactionary petty-bourgeois operation with close ties to the Republican Party and “herd immunity” proponents such as former Trump administration official Dr. Paul Alexander.

In addition to participating in the fascist anti-vaccine rally in Washington in January, Alexander infamously wrote in a July 4, 2020, email to then-Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Public Affairs Michael Caputo that schools and businesses should be kept open during the pandemic because “we want them infected.”

As he did during the Canadian “Freedom Convoy,” Alexander has played a leading role in the American “People’s Convoy.” Both Alexander and Brase are frequent call-in guests on Stephen Bannon’s podcast. The two have jointly coordinated convoy actions with Republican lawmakers and local police. On his Substack web page, Alexander has documented the many meetings he has held with Republican politicians since the arrival of the convoy in the Washington D.C. area.

In addition to the aforementioned Cruz, Johnson, Gaetz, Greene and Massie, co-organizer Brase and Alexander have met with the following Republican lawmakers: Sen. Josh Hawley (Missouri), Sen. Joni Ernst (Iowa), Rep. Jim Jordan (Ohio), Rep. Sam Graves (Missouri), Rep. Garret Graves (Louisiana), Rep. Rodney Davis (Illinois), Rep. Eric Crawford (Arkansas), Rep. Bob Gibbs (Ohio) and Pennsylvania State Senator Doug Mastriano.

During their meeting on Monday, Brase told Jordan that the convoy was “a very massive movement” and that it would not leave metro D.C., to which Jordan replied, “God bless you.”

People’s Convoy co-organizer Mike Landis, speaking for the militia elements within the caravan, told participants during Monday’s meeting that the convoy was “not going to go in and throat-punch them just yet, even though I know we would all love to do that.”

Cruz, Hawley, Jordan, Sam Graves, Garret Graves, Crawford, Gibbs and Gaetz all voted against certifying the election of Biden following the attack on the

Capitol. Mastriano has already been subpoenaed by the House Select Committee charged with investigating the failed coup after it was reported last year that his campaign spent thousands of dollars chartering buses to Washington D.C. for Trump supporters to participate in the attack.

On Wednesday, *Politico* reported that Republican Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas, not content with simply meeting with and agreeing to the fascistic demands of the caravan, gave select members of the “People’s Convoy” a “tour of the Capitol last week—even as the building remains mostly closed to the public.” *Politico* noted that a congressional aide alerted the Department of Justice to the presence of convoy organizers out of concern that the “guided tour could help the protesters plan an entry into the building.” The aide told the publication he had heard a Capitol Hill police officer complain that convoy participants were being allowed into the Capitol.

The officer’s worries are not without merit. On Thursday, the *Daily Beast* reported that Philadelphia prosecutors were seeking to revoke the bail of Joshua Macias for participating in the convoy. Macias is co-founder of Vets for Trump. He was arrested on November 5, 2020, outside of the Philadelphia Convention Center while carrying a loaded handgun on his person. In Macias’ vehicle, adorned with QAnon slogans and parked near the Convention Center, police found an AR-15 rifle and ammunition.

Macias was released on bail on December 5, 2020. On January 6, 2021, Macias spoke at a “Freedom Rally” in Washington D.C. in furtherance of Trump’s coup.

In seeking to revoke his bail, prosecutors wrote last week that Macias was “involved in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.”



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