

January 6 Select Committee requests to interview Republican lawmaker who provided “tour” of Capitol grounds day before coup

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20 May 2022

On Thursday, the January 6 House Select Committee charged with “investigating” ex-President Donald Trump’s failed coup released a letter requesting that current Georgia Republican Rep. Barry Loudermilk appear before the committee next week to answer questions “regarding a tour you led through parts of the Capitol complex on January 5, 2021.” The committee’s request comes one week after they subpoenaed five of Trump’s Republican co-conspirators, including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (California).

Prior to the committee issuing subpoenas last week to Reps. McCarthy, Mo Brooks (Alabama), Andy Biggs (Arizona), Scott Perry (Pennsylvania) and Jim Jordan (Ohio), the committee had also requested to speak with current Texas representative and former White House doctor under Obama and Trump, Ronnie Jackson. In their letter requesting Jackson’s testimony, the committee revealed that during the attack on the Capitol, Oath Keeper founder Stewart Rhodes, who currently faces seditious conspiracy charges for his role in the coup, was trying to get in contact with Jackson as his Oath Keepers were storming the Capitol.

In the committee’s letter requesting Loudermilk’s appearance, which was signed by Chair Bennie Thompson (Democrat-Mississippi) and Vice Chair Liz Cheney (Republican-Wyoming), the committee claims to have reviewed footage which “directly contradicts” a statement made by Loudermilk in a letter sent to the Capitol Police Board earlier this year. In the letter, Loudermilk claimed that “[t]here were no tours, no large groups, no one with MAGA hats on.”

On January 12, 2021, Democratic Rep. Mikie Sherrill (New Jersey) and 33 other Democratic lawmakers sent a letter to the Capitol Police asking them to investigate “suspicious activity” regarding an “extremely high number of outside groups in the complex on Tuesday, January 5.”

Sherrill wrote, “visitors encountered by some of the Members of Congress in this letter appeared to be associated

with the rally at the White House the following day,” adding that the “presence” of these groups “within the Capitol Complex was indeed suspicious.”

At the time the alleged “tours” took place the Capitol was closed to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In response to the committee’s request for an interview, Loudermilk issued a statement admitting that he did in fact meet with a “constituent family” in the “House Office buildings” on January 5, but that this was not an example of a “suspicious group or ‘reconnaissance tour.’”

Loudermilk claimed the group he led “never entered the Capitol building” and that the “family did not enter the Capitol grounds on the 6th.” Loudermilk added that “no one in that family has been investigated or charged in connection to January 6th.” The congressman, a former US Air Force communication operations specialist for command, control and intelligence operations, did not say if someone associated with this family has since been charged or investigated for their actions related to the failed coup.

Loudermilk was one of 138 House Republicans to vote against certifying the election of Joe Biden even after the attack on the Capitol. During the attack itself, Loudermilk, as revealed in text messages turned over to the January 6 committee by Trump’s White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, was in direct communication with Meadows as the building was under siege. At one point Loudermilk texted Meadows: “They have breached the Capitol.” Meadows responded telling Loudermilk that “POTUS [Trump] is engaging,” to which Loudermilk replied, “Thanks. This doesn’t help *our* cause.” [emphasis added]

While during the attack Loudermilk was apparently well aware which party launched the coup, as was virtually the entire Republican Party leadership, in the months following the attack, Loudermilk has since rejected the notion that Trump or the Republicans bore any responsibility. In one interview last year, Loudermilk claimed in bald-faced lie that Trump “didn’t have anything to do with January 6. I

think that's a far-fetched idea.”

Quite the opposite is the case. In the months prior to and after the election, as part of Trump's multifaceted conspiracy to remain in power regardless of the vote totals, the president and his Republican allies, such as Loudermilk, built support among Trump sycophants and far-right militia groups for the claim that if Trump lost, the 2020 presidential vote was “rigged” and that the only way to “stop the steal” was to come to Washington D.C. on January 6, march to the Capitol, and as Trump said, “fight like hell.”

Demonstrating the fact that Trump's coup was not a “spontaneous riot” but an organized conspiracy that had the backing of large sections of the Republican Party, Loudermilk was one of several Georgia Republican politicians who, following Trump's November loss, sent a letter to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger expressing concerns about “serious allegations of voting irregularities,” despite there being no evidence of any such thing.

In the November 10, 2020, letter, Loudermilk, along with Georgia Reps. Earl Carter, Drew Ferguson, Austin Scott, Jody Hice, Rick Allen, and at-the-time Reps.-elect Andrew Clyde and QAnon fascist Marjorie Taylor Greene, called on Raffensperger to do a “thorough review” of allegations advanced by Trump before certifying the election.

Loudermilk was one of 126 House Republicans who signed on to a December 2020 amicus brief asking the Supreme Court to allow the state of Texas to file a lawsuit that would have invalidated the election results in Georgia, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, handing the election to Trump while disenfranchising over 20 million voters in the process.

Pointing to the coordinated character of the January 6 events, Republicans inside Congress backed Trump's efforts to overturn the vote through an unconstitutional effort to challenge electoral votes even from their own states, while outside, far-right militia groups, such as the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, III Percenters and QAnon fascists, spearheaded a violent attack prepared in advance.

Between November 2020 and the beginning of January 2021, right-wing social media pages and pro-Trump message boards shared detailed plans of the layout of the Capitol, including maps of the underground tunnels which lawmakers use to travel during emergencies.

Despite the fact that it is now known that the FBI, Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police and the Capitol Police knew that an attack on the Capitol by far-right militia groups was imminent, due in part to the fact they were actively monitoring the internal communications of groups like the Proud Boys *prior* to January 6, on the day of the certification, deliberately undermanned and under-equipped

police lines were quickly overwhelmed by pro-Trump fascists.

Once Trump's Brownshirts broke the police lines, Proud Boys, such as former US Marine Dominic Pezzola, used a police riot shield to break one of the only non-reinforced Capitol windows. Once the window was broken, Pezzola breached the Capitol and opened the doors from the inside, allowing fascists to storm the building, forcing Congress to suspend the certification process, as lawmakers, their aides and the press fled for their lives from the pro-Trump mob.

While over 800 people have been charged in the attack on the Capitol, none of the high-level organizers or politicians who actually orchestrated the coup, including Trump, have been charged, more than 16 months after the fact. Congress previously referred former Trump adviser Steve Bannon and the aforementioned Meadows to the Department of Justice (DoJ) on contempt of Congress charges for refusing to cooperate with a subpoena from the Select Committee. However, so far only Bannon has been arraigned, with his trial set to begin in the late summer.

The January 6 Select Committee, which has held one public hearing since its inception last year, currently has plans for multiple “prime-time” public hearings beginning on June 9, 2022. In the last few months the committee has wavered on sending a criminal referral to the DoJ and it was revealed this week that the committee has refused to turn over any evidence gathered in their investigation to the DoJ, despite being requested to do so last month.



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