

# Virginia Thomas and Trump's election coup: More revelations about role of Supreme Court justice's wife

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A day after the January 6 House Select Committee held the first of a series of nationally televised hearings, the *Washington Post* reported on the discovery of dozens more emails between Virginia Thomas and 29 Republican state lawmakers from Arizona in which she advanced Trump's scheme to replace duly elected electors with fraudulent pro-Trump substitutes.

Last month it was revealed that Thomas, the wife of arch-reactionary Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, had sent emails to the Arizona Speaker of the House Rusty Bowers and state Representative Shawna Bolick, demanding that they reject the popular vote and "take action to ensure [a] clean slate of electors are chosen."

Spreading Trump's fascistic claims that the 2020 election was fraudulent and Biden was illegitimate as president, Thomas called on the Arizona Republicans to overturn Biden's victory in the state, which he carried by more than 10,000 votes. She urged them to install a slate of pro-Trump electors instead of the Biden electors, who had actually been chosen by the voters.

On Friday the *Post* confirmed that Thomas sent the same email to more than half of the Republicans in the Arizona state legislature, 29 different state representatives in total. The first messages were all sent on November 9, 2020, two days after Biden was declared the winner of the 2020 election. In the messages, she called on the politicians to "stand strong in the face of political and media pressure" and "fight back" against (non-existent) voter fraud.

Trump himself made a similar to appeal to over a dozen Michigan state lawmakers, who convened at the White House on November 20, 2020. Another Trump co-

conspirator, Pennsylvania Rep. Scott Perry, likewise advanced efforts to have Pennsylvania's Democratic electors rejected by the state legislature in pursuit of Trump's coup.

One of the Republicans who responded affirmatively to Thomas's call to overthrow the government and install Trump as president-dictator was then-state Rep. Anthony Kern. The *Post* noted Kern was "a Stop the Steal supporter" who "was photographed outside the Capitol" during the January 6 attack. The former state legislator, who has yet to be charged for participating in the attack, has already earned Trump's endorsement in his 2022 primary contest, no doubt for prior services rendered.

The *Post* reported that Thomas, a life-long Republican operative and Trump's henchwoman, continued to badger lawmakers via email for over a month, demanding they install pro-Trump electors. On December 13 Thomas sent another batch of emails to 22 Arizona House members and one senator. In a bald-faced lie, she told the lawmakers they had the "Constitutional power and authority" to "protect the integrity of our elections" which had "never before in our nation's history ... been so threatened by fraud and unconstitutional procedures."

The emails confirm that Trump's conspiracy to overthrow the election did not begin with his December 19 call to action on Twitter, where he instigated his followers and Republican accomplices to descend on Washington D.C. and "be wild" outside the Capitol on January 6. Trump's coup did not rest on the combat prowess of the far-right militias like the Proud Boys or Oath Keepers.

In reality, the effort to enlist state legislatures to overturn

the election was planned well in advance by Republicans like Thomas and the fascist Stephen Bannon through Republican-funded think tanks like the Claremont Institute, the Bradley Foundation, Groundswell and others, in coordination with Republican politicians at the state and federal levels.

On January 6, a majority of the Republicans in Congress supported Trump's effort to overturn the election, with 147 Republicans voting to challenge the Electoral College results even after the attack on Congress, while all but 10 Republicans in the House voted against impeaching Trump over his role in the attack.

The Republican Party as a whole continues to back Trump's fascist lies that the election was "stolen" and that the attempted coup was "legitimate political discourse." Following Thursday's hearings, Trump again attacked the January 6 committee as an "unselect committee of political HACKS" and called the fascist attack on Congress as the "greatest movement" in the history of the United States.

It was a deliberate decision that during Thursday's nationally televised hearing, neither committee chair Bennie Thompson (Democrat-Mississippi) nor vice chair Liz Cheney (Republican-Wyoming) mentioned Virginia Thomas' role in the plot.

They sought to limit the exposure of the political crimes of January 6 to Trump's personal role, while covering up the fact that fascism has found support both in the Republican Party and in significant sections of the Supreme Court and police-military-intelligence apparatus as well.

The scope of the ultra-right takeover of the Republican Party was underscored by the arrest Thursday morning of Michigan Republican gubernatorial candidate Ryan Kelley for his actions in connection with the failed coup.

FBI agents arrested the 40-year-old real estate agent at his home in Allendale, Michigan. Kelley was charged with four misdemeanors, including knowingly entering the US Capitol or Capitol grounds, disorderly and disruptive conduct in that space, knowingly engaging in physical violence against a person or property on the Capitol grounds and willfully injuring or attacking property of the United States. Each count carries a maximum one-year

prison sentence.

Evidence cited in court documents includes video of Kelley pushing up the Capitol steps and goading others to attack, with one video showing him yelling to Trump's foot soldiers, "Come on, let's go! This is war, baby!"

Kelley, who has previously described January 6 as an "energizing event," has centered his gubernatorial campaign on appealing to Trump and his fascist supporters. He has previously touted his endorsement by Michigan's Three Percenters militia group and participated in the April 2020 storming of the Lansing state Capitol, a prelude to the January 6 attack.

Kelley was a leading Republican candidate for governor prior to his arrest, after five other Republican candidates were denied ballot status last month when the Michigan elections bureau found substantial numbers of fraudulent and duplicate signatures on their nominating petitions.

The five remaining Michigan Republican candidates for governor on the ballot for the August 2 primary are Kelley, the ultra-right media commentator Tudor Dixon, pastor Ralph Rebandt, businessman Kevin Rinke and Garrett Soldano.

Kelley's next hearing will be held virtually next week after he was released on bond Thursday afternoon to the cheers of a small crowd of supporters who had gathered outside the federal courthouse in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



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