

After headlining fascistic “Moms for Liberty” event

Trump campaign descends on rural Pickens, South Carolina, drawing an estimated 50,000

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On Saturday, ex-president Donald Trump held a large outdoor campaign rally in tiny Pickens, South Carolina. Despite the sweltering heat, which resulted in over 50 hospitalizations, an estimated 50,000 people descended on the town to listen to Trump deliver a 90-minute fascist diatribe.

While Trump, unsurprisingly, dominated over Joe Biden in South Carolina in the 2020 election, besting him by roughly 12 percentage points, Trump’s victory was even wider in Pickens County. Out of the roughly 66,000 votes tallied for president in the county, Trump beat Biden by a margin of over 50 percentage points, 74 to 23.

Pickens, with a population of just over 3,200, is roughly 45 times smaller than Waco, Texas, where Trump held his first campaign rally. Yet the crowd at Saturday’s event was significantly larger than the estimated 15,000 who attended the Waco rally, a result of thousands of Trump supporters traveling from out of state, including Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Indiana and Florida, per the *Greenville News*.

Shortly after the event ended, a violent thunderstorm ripped through the town causing widespread power outages. More than 24 hours later, Duke Energy estimated that nearly 1,700 customers in Pickens were still without power.

Due to the sweltering heat and stale comments, thousands of attendees filtered out of the rally after Trump began his rote, grievance-filled speech, focused mainly on his ongoing legal troubles. These, he claimed, were the fault of “Marxists” who want to “take away my freedom because I will never let them take away your freedom.”

Trump continues to dominate his Republican rivals in the primary field and appears to be on his way to locking up a majority of endorsements for the party’s nomination well before the South Carolina primary is held next February.

During his speech, Trump repeated many of the same phrases and anecdotes he has been expounding for years, including attacks on immigrants and transgender persons. He reiterated his campaign stump claim that the “biggest enemy” of America is not China or Russia, but “the sick people from within, the communists, the Marxists...”

Trump again promised to “deny entry to all Communists and Marxists,” but went on to say that the “bigger problem” was the “communists, Marxists and fascists that have been here for a long time,” declaring, “We got to get them the hell out too.”

In opening the Pickens rally, Georgia Republican Representative and QAnon fascist Marjorie Taylor Greene boasted that she had filed articles of impeachment against Biden and attacked his “disgusting son Hunter.” Whipping up the crowd, Greene claimed Biden and Hillary Clinton held onto classified documents, but, unlike Trump, were not prosecuted. This fueled chants of “lock him up” and “lock her up.”

Echoing Trump’s lies and calling for the Republican Party to back him in the 2024 election, Greene said Trump was “innocent from the beginning.” She called for both of his impeachments to be expunged and “erased from history,” and ended her speech with a fascistic attack on LGBTQ persons. “All last month was Pride month,” she said, adding that “what started under the guise of equality is now targeting our children.”

Following Greene, South Carolina Representatives Russell Fry and William Timmons, state Treasurer Curtis Loftis, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette and Governor Henry McMaster delivered short speeches praising Trump and pledging their fealty in the 2024 election.

In contrast to every other politician who spoke, Senator Graham, a native Pickens County resident, was booed by the crowd throughout his entire speech, with several in the crowd calling him a “traitor.” While Graham is backing Trump now, following the ex-president’s failed coup of January 6, 2021, he made a few critical statements, including that Trump bore responsibility for the attack.

Seeking to placate the crowd, Graham noted that as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee he helped elevate Trump’s three right-wing Supreme Court justices. When that didn’t mollify the crowd, he effusively praised Trump, declaring, “I’ve come to like President Trump, and he likes himself, and we got that in common. And I’m going to help him become president of the United States.”

Politico reported it was Graham who urged the Trump campaign to reach out to local Pickens officials weeks ago to begin preparing for the rally. The date was chosen to coincide with a local Independence Day festival and follow Trump’s appearance in Philadelphia the previous night at the “Moms for Liberty” (MFL) conference, dubbed the “Joyful Warriors National Summit.”

Both events featured dozens of Republican politicians and both were of an extreme right character, reflecting the fascistic trajectory of the Republican Party. Speakers at the Philadelphia event included Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy, former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson and Florida Representative Byron Donalds.

Prior to the Moms for Liberty conference, the Hamilton County, Indiana chapter of the organization drew nationwide headlines after it was revealed that the group had sent out its “Parent Brigade” newsletter with a featured quote from Adolf Hitler on its front cover. The quote read: “He alone who OWNS the youth, GAINS

the future,” *Adolf Hitler*.”

After the *IndyStar* published an article featuring the newsletter, MFL released an updated version that *still* featured the Hitler quote, but with “additional context,” namely that said the quote “should put parents on alert... We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.”

The following morning the group removed the quote and issued a statement saying, “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology.

Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was originally slated to speak at the MFL event as well, but he pulled out just days before. At a recent town hall, Kennedy claimed that he was unaware of the fascistic politics of MFL when he originally agreed to appear.

Moms for Liberty was established in 2021 by Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich and grew quickly due to heavy promotion on Fox News, backing by billionaires, and Republican Party support. It is a nationwide organization that claims chapters in 45 states and a membership of over 100,000. Members of the group have frequently attended school board meetings, where, backed by Proud Boys, they have threatened to kill librarians and teachers.

Last month, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) designated the group as an “anti-government extremist” organization (the same designation the SPLC has given to the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers), in part due its “web of political allies,” including “white nationalists, election deniers and participants in January 6th events.” The SPLC noted that a major reason MFL was able to donate to far-right candidates in the 2022 midterms was a \$50,000 donation from billionaire Publix grocery store heiress Julie Fancelli, who also bankrolled one of the “Stop the Steal” rallies outside the US Capitol on January 6.



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