

Right-wing political theater at House hearing for Attorney General Garland

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An oversight hearing before the House Judiciary Committee was a display of the mounting crisis of the US political system. Fascistic Republican House members branded Attorney General Merrick Garland an instrument of the Biden White House in whitewashing the president's son, Hunter, over his corrupt business activities in Ukraine and China.

Meanwhile, Democrats sought to defend Biden and rebut the Republicans' promotion of conspiracy theories, while saying virtually nothing about the crimes of ex-president Donald Trump. These are of infinitely greater political and constitutional significance than the money-grubbing of Hunter Biden, whether or not some of the payoffs were subsequently passed on to his father, who was then vice president in the Obama administration.

The hearing was dominated by ultra-right Republicans, including the committee chair, Jim Jordan, and fascist representatives such as Matt Gaetz, Andy Biggs, Dan Bishop, Chip Roy, Thomas Massie, Troy Nehls and Ken Buck. For the most part, they did not permit Garland to answer their questions, voicing various charges and conspiracy theories, demanding he respond, and then cutting him off to go to the next "question" before he could do so.

There was little effort by the Democrats to object to this procedure, which more resembled a kangaroo court or a Star Chamber proceeding than an actual hearing.

In his prepared statement and during the few occasions where he was able to actually address the charges over Hunter Biden at any length, Garland did little more than repeat a description of the Department of Justice worthy of a children's textbook.

"There is not one set of laws for the powerful and another for the powerless; one for the rich, another for the poor; one for Democrats, another for Republicans;

or different rules, depending upon one's race or ethnicity or religion," he claimed.

Every worker and any serious analyst of American society knows this is not true. There *are* "two systems of justice," as the Republicans claim, but those systems are divided by class, not political party.

Hunter Biden was able to get away with transparently corrupt influence peddling under the Obama-Biden administration, and the Trump administration only began an investigation when it seemed politically advantageous to the White House. Even then, the Justice Department found that his relations with Ukrainian oligarchs and Chinese billionaires were unseemly, but not illegal.

Donald Trump pursued a corrupt business operation over many decades in Democratic-controlled New York, without any repercussions. In the Trump administration, his son-in-law Jared Kushner established lucrative relationships with the Saudi royal family that netted him billions, not millions, without any legal consequences.

No one on the Judiciary Committee, however, was interested in pursuing the issue of two systems of justice from that standpoint. That is because both parties, the Democrats as much as the Republicans, represent the class interests of the corporate elite, the financial aristocracy that dominates American society.

The very day of the hearing, President Biden was in New York City, spending much of his day schmoozing with the super-rich at two well-attended fundraisers for his reelection campaign. In remarks to his audiences, he declared, "I'm running because democracy is at stake and because, 2024, democracy is on the ballot once again. And let there be no question. Donald Trump and his MAGA Republicans are determined to destroy American democracy."

These remarks were made largely out of sight. No Democratic member of the Judiciary Committee sought to indict his or her Republican “colleagues” for the assault on democracy which Trump and his supporters are spearheading.

In response to repeated questions from Republican members, and threats to find him in contempt or even impeach him, Attorney General Garland refused to answer questions about internal discussions within the Department of Justice on the Hunter Biden case, including any discussions he has had with US Attorney David Weiss, who has been leading that investigation.

He noted that Weiss was appointed a US Attorney for Delaware by Donald Trump, and that he had retained Weiss in office in order to preserve continuity in the investigation. When Weiss requested it, Garland said, he named him a special counsel, allowing him to extend his investigation and bring charges against the younger Biden in other states, if warranted.

The only charges made public so far against the president’s son are comparatively minor: two counts of failure to pay income tax, and one count of filing a false application to obtain a gun permit. No charges have been brought over either the Ukraine or China financial dealings, which have been the main focus of the right-wing media and the Republican Party, although these may still be under investigation.

Garland said that he had pledged during his Senate confirmation hearing not to interfere in any way with Weiss’s investigation and he claimed that he had not done so, and that the White House had not put any pressure on him to intervene.

These claims were assailed by the committee chair, Jim Jordan, who began the hearing with the declaration, in a near shout, that “The fix is in. Even with the face-saving indictment last week of Hunter Biden, everyone knows the fix is in.”

Jordan was referring to the indictment of Biden on gun charges, after the collapse of a plea deal during the summer which would have allowed the president’s son to take a delayed plea, with the charge to be dismissed if he remained drug-free for the next two years.

The unedifying spectacle continued for five hours, with Republican members raising a series of conspiracy theories popular on right-wing media, such as the claim that Ray Epps, one of those arrested for the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, was a secret informant or

agent provocateur of the FBI. This is an effort to paint the entire mob assault, instigated by Trump, as a “false flag” operation by the “deep state.” Epps actually pled guilty to misdemeanor charges the day before the House hearing.

In one of the more bizarre episodes, fascist Republican Matt Gaetz pressed Garland on the burning issue of Hunter Biden’s art work, including a painting he sold to a major Democratic financial supporter. Eight months later, President Biden appointed the donor to an unpaid position on the Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad.

Democrat Steve Cohen then sought to raise the issue of the FBI’s investigation of Gaetz on sex-trafficking charges, which was closed without any charges being brought—a demonstration of the Democrats’ embrace of the method of political mudslinging, and their refusal to raise the issue of the attempted political coup by Trump to establish himself as a dictator-president.

In fact, there was virtually no mention at the hearing of the name of the ex-president, now the heavy favorite to win the Republican presidential nomination in 2024, as the entire Republican Party moves drastically towards fascist authoritarianism.

The Republicans spent little time questioning Garland about his decision to name Jack Smith a special prosecutor, leading to federal criminal charges related to January 6 and to Trump’s unauthorized retention of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate after he left office.

Democrats made barely any reference to the attempted coup, and none at all about the role of the congressional Republicans, including many members of the Judiciary Committee, in the events leading up to January 6.



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