

18 indicted on felony charges for fake Trump elector scheme in Arizona

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On Wednesday, an Arizona grand jury handed down an indictment of leading figures and fake electors in former President Donald Trump's attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

A total of 18 individuals were indicted, including 11 named Republican fake electors who submitted a document to Congress falsely declaring that Trump won the state of Arizona in 2020, even though he lost the state to Democrat Joe Biden by 10,457 votes.

Unnamed in the indictment, because they had not yet been served with the charges, are seven others, including Trump's Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, his lawyer at the time Rudy Giuliani and his top legal strategist Boris Epshteyn.

Significantly, Trump himself is identified as "Unindicted Co-conspirator 1" throughout the grand jury indictment. The indictment defines this individual as "A former president of the United States who spread false claims of election fraud following the 2020 election."

The 11 fake electors were charged with nine felony counts, including conspiracy, fraudulent schemes and practices and forgery. Among these Republicans are the former Arizona Republican Party Chair Kelli Ward, 2022 US Senate candidate James Lamon, and two sitting state lawmakers Jacob Hoffman and Anthony Kern.

In announcing the indictment, Arizona's Democratic Attorney General Kris Mayes said, "I will not allow American democracy to be undermined. It's too important." In an interview with Associated Press on Thursday, Arizona's Democratic Secretary of State Adrian Fontes said, "This is not some kind of a game. This is not some sort of fantasy football league. This is real life, and bad acts have real potential bad consequences."

With the indictments, Arizona follows Georgia, Michigan and Nevada in bringing charges against those who concocted slates of fake electors to be submitted during the certification of the presidential election by Congress that took place on January 6, 2021.

The fake elector scheme was a critical part of the conspiracy to hijack the presidency by Donald Trump leading up to the January 6 coup attempt. The mob assault on the US Capitol on that day was planned to create a crisis by taking hostage or possibly killing key officials such as Vice President Mike Pence and Speaker Nancy Pelosi and then certify Trump as president with the fake elector slates in six battleground states.

The 58-page indictment goes through in detail the series of actions taken by the Arizona defendants to claim the vote had been stolen by the Democrats, that Trump had won the state and to work on overturning the election result.

This included, for example, an email message sent by Republican Party Chair Kelli Ward to the members of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors "suggesting serious election fraud and malfeasance had occurred." Ward urged the five supervisors "to delay certifying Maricopa County's results, and she urged the Republican supervisors to contact lawyers associated with the Trump Campaign about the alleged election fraud."

On December 14, 2020, Ward organized a meeting of the fake electors at the Arizona Republican Party headquarters. The group posted photos and video on social media, with Ward posting on Twitter, "Oh yes, we did! We are the electors who represent the legal voters of Arizona! #Trump2020 #MAGA."

After reviewing numerous examples of similar and related activities by the 18 defendants, the indictment

states, “Based on the above, and other information reviewed, Defendants and their unindicted co-conspirators deceived the public with false claims of election fraud in order to prevent the lawful transfer of the presidency, to keep Unindicted Coconspirator 1 in office against the will of Arizona’s voters and deprive Arizona voters of their right to vote and have their votes counted.”

The indictment continues, “By sending in false electoral votes, they obtained a benefit under Arizona law by creating the opportunity for Pence to reject the legitimate certified Democratic elector votes for Biden-Harris and declare Unindicted Coconspirator 1 the winner of the 2020 Presidential election.”

The charges and penalties against Trump’s associates and those in the Republican Party who participated in his coup attempt are piling up, and some of them are facing disbarment and serious jail time.

Meanwhile the conspirator-in-chief has yet to be tried, not to mention convicted of a crime in relation to January 6 more than three years after the coup attempt concocted in the White House aimed at keeping him in office as president-dictator.

The association of Donald Trump with Boris Epshteyn is a revealing example of the depths of corruption and gangsterism that surround the fascist former president.

According to a report in the *New York Times*, “Epshteyn was a constant presence during Mr. Trump’s civil trial in January on charges that he had defamed the New York writer E. Jean Carroll. ... He has described himself as an ‘in-house counsel’ to Mr. Trump and has been something of a quarterback for the various legal teams working on the former president’s defenses in four criminal cases. He usually speaks with Mr. Trump several times a day.”

The *Times* report continues, “Mr. Epshteyn has been arrested twice in Arizona over the last 10 years, once in 2014 for assault after a bar fight, in which he pleaded guilty and the conviction was set aside, and again in 2021, after he was accused of inappropriately touching two women. In that case, he pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct, received probation and a fine, and the conviction again was set aside.”

In Nevada in December, a grand jury indicted six Republicans on felony charges of offering a false instrument for filing and uttering a forged instrument in

the fake elector scheme. They have all pleaded not guilty.

In Michigan in July, the state attorney general filed felony charges that included forgery and conspiracy to commit election forgery against 16 Republican fake electors. One had charges dropped after agreeing to cooperate, and the other 15 have pleaded not guilty.

In Georgia in August, 19 associates and Trump were charged in an indictment accusing them of participating in a scheme to illegally overturn the election results. Four pleaded guilty in exchange for the dropping of some charges, while the remaining 15 have pleaded not guilty.

Downplaying the dangers represented to democracy by the attempted coup in 2021 and Trump’s open and blatant efforts to disrupt the upcoming 2024 presidential election, various legal and political initiatives have been advanced claiming that the likelihood of future “electoral mischief” has been reduced.

As reported by AP, “Congress took a significant step in cutting off further avenues for electoral mischief. A bipartisan bill signed by Biden in 2022 makes it harder to submit rival slates of electors, requiring that only ones certified by a state’s governor go to Congress for certification.”

According to Edward B. Foley, a law professor at Ohio State University, “The possibility of alternate electors has narrowed incredibly.” Meanwhile, Michael Teter of the 65 Project, “an organization formed to pursue legal discipline against lawyers involved in filing the dozens of unsuccessful lawsuits challenging Trump’s 2020 loss,” said the threat of prosecution has “lessened enthusiasm among election deniers for litigation challenging their many losses at the polls in 2022.”

Meanwhile Trump is now the presumptive nominee for the Republicans in the upcoming election in November in an expected rematch of 2020 with President Joe Biden.



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