

The US ruling class lurches to right: Kennedy and Trump appeal for support at fascistic Libertarian Convention

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Over the weekend, former President Donald Trump and independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appealed for support from the far right at the Libertarian National Convention held in Washington D.C. Kennedy spoke at the convention on Friday, while Trump appeared on Saturday.

The candidates' appearance at the convention reflects the continuing shift to the right of the US ruling class. As Trump noted in his speech, it was the first time a former US president spoke at the Libertarian Party convention.

This is not a reflection of sudden growth or a surge in popular interest in the Libertarian Party and its brand of right-wing capitalist politics. Rather, under conditions where support for socialism is increasing among workers and youth, Kennedy and Trump are attempting to assure the ruling class that their administrations would defend private property above all else.

Robert Kennedy Jr. was eliminated on Sunday in the first round of voting in the nominating process, garnering only 21 delegate votes, or just 2.07 percent. The chair of the Libertarian Party, Angela McArdle, ruled before the vote that Trump would not be eligible because his team had failed to file its paperwork properly. In the first round of voting, Trump received six write-in votes.

Despite being eliminated, Kennedy issued a tweet on Sunday thanking the party. He said he would have "accepted the nomination if offered because independent and third parties need to unite right now to reclaim our country from the corrupt two-party system."

Kennedy, like all third-party candidates, is in the process of attempting to obtain ballot access. As of this writing he has access in six states, while the Libertarian Party has access in 38 states.

Trump is currently a slight favorite to win the 2024 election, while Kennedy continues to poll between 8-10 percent nationally. Kennedy is running as an "independent" candidate, but he and the Republican Trump share virtually the same right-wing, anti-immigrant program, as well as at least one mega-donor.

This past week, the *Daily Beast* reported Federal Election Commission financial reports showed that billionaire Timothy

Mellon last month donated \$5 million to Kennedy's super PAC, the "American Values 2024" political action committee. Mellon previously donated \$20 million to the Kennedy PAC, as well as \$15 million to Trump's "Make America Great Again Inc." PAC.

Prior to delivering his speech on Saturday, Trump was welcomed to the stage by Chairwoman Angela McArdle, who was re-elected to the party's top post on Sunday. McArdle, alongside Nick Brana, organized the "Rage Against the War Machine" rally in Washington D.C. last year. The aim of the rally was to dragoon disoriented middle class anti-war elements into the Libertarian Party, which, under the leadership of McArdle, openly embraces neo-Nazis and antisemites.

In the lead-up to the convention, on May 21, McArdle tweeted that she was "excited to announce that @iansmithfitness is joining us at the [Libertarian Party National] Enemy of The State party this Friday!"

Smith is a New Jersey gym owner, who gained notoriety in the spring of 2020 for refusing to close his business at the beginning of the pandemic. Since then, Smith has become a regular speaker on the "ReAwaken America" tour, which was co-founded by Trump's former national security advisor, retired Gen. Michael Flynn.

In a profile of Smith last year, *Forbes* wrote that he is "popular among the far-right and has recommended neo-Nazi propaganda such as a World War II movie that paints Germany as the victim and questions the taught history of the war, posts memes denying the Holocaust on social media, and said on an episode of the far-right *Pete Quinones Show* podcast that Jewish people are behind 'all of these things that are used to control us.'"

Appealing to the Smith co-thinkers in the audience, Trump focused his attacks on Biden, Marxism and communism.

Addressing "the fierce champions of freedom" in the room, Trump said he was "honored to be the first president in American history to speak" at a Libertarian national convention. He proceeded to warn of the danger of "left-wing fascism" and promised he would "fight for the freedom to own a firearm over taxation."

The crowd roared with approval, prompting Trump to add, "Oh. Oh, that was interesting. You are going to like me, firearms, nobody better than me, just got the [National Rifle Association]

full endorsement.”

Trump added:

We believe that Marxism is an evil doctrine straight from the ashes of hell. Having Marxism in our government is intolerable and teaching it to our children is considered, to us, child abuse. ... Our rights and freedoms have never been more in danger than they are right now. That is why I have come to extend a hand of friendship to ask for your partnership to defeat communism, to defeat Marxism and defeat crooked Joe Biden, who is destroying our country.

Trump promised that in the White House he would be a “true friend to Libertarians” and called on the party to nominate him for president. When a large section of the crowd booed in response, Trump jeered the delegates.

Only if you want to win. Maybe you don’t want to win. Maybe you don’t want to win. ... Only do that if you want to win. If you want to lose, don’t do that. Keep getting your 3 percent every four years.

Trump committed to putting a “Libertarian in my cabinet and also Libertarians in senior posts,” if the party supported him.

Or you can keep going the way you have for the last long decades and get your 3 percent and meet again and get another 3 percent. No, you want to make yourself winners, it’s time to be winners. It’s common sense. It’s time to be a winner.

While the aspiring dictator was booed frequently throughout his truncated speech, when he touted tax cuts for corporations and pledges to pardon his January 6 foot soldiers, the crowd erupted in cheers. Trump said it would be ‘my great honor to pardon the peaceful January 6 protesters, or as I often call them, ‘the hostages.’ There has never been a group of people treated so harshly or so unfairly.”

Trump also promised to commute the sentence of Ross Ulbricht, the founder of the online black market site, the Silk Road. Before it was shut down by the US government, the website was primarily used to buy and sell drugs, guns, counterfeit documents and personal information using Bitcoin. In 2015, Ulbricht was sentenced to life in prison for operating the site.

Like Trump, in his remarks Friday Kennedy Jr. crafted his speech to appeal to the rabidly pro-capitalist and right-wing crowd. Kennedy pontificated on individual “liberty” and the failure of Trump and Biden to protect the “right” of individuals, and corporations, to spread COVID-19. Kennedy never once referred

to the most blatant attack on the US Constitution by Trump and the Republican Party, the January 6, 2021 attempted putsch.

Instead, Kennedy attacked Trump from the right for imposing minimal and fleeting public health and safety measures at the onset of the pandemic, including the “Operation Warp Speed” program to create COVID-19 vaccines. He accused Trump of getting “rolled by bureaucrats.”

“He said he was going to run America like a business,” Kennedy declared. “Then he came in and gave the keys to all our businesses to a 50-year bureaucrat that hadn’t been elected to anything and had no accountability.”

Appealing to the business owners, anti-science fanatics and fascistic militia elements in attendance, Kennedy Jr. opined:

What disturbed me most during the pandemic was not what the government was trying to do and what it succeeded in doing. It was really how the public complied ... except for the people in this room.

Ignoring the genocide of Native Americans, slavery, the internment of the Japanese Americans during World War II, Jim Crow, the bipartisan war on immigrants, and mass arrests of anti-police violence and anti-genocide protesters in recent years, Kennedy claimed Trump’s limited public health measures represented “the greatest restriction on individual liberty this country has ever known.”

In an attempt to capitalize on broad anti-war sentiment, Kennedy declared he would end the “regime-change wars,” which prompted several people in the crowd to yell, “Stop supporting Israel!”

For decades, Kennedy has supported the Zionist state and in a March interview with Reuters, he rejected a ceasefire, saying, “Hamas has to be destroyed,” and Israel is a “moral nation.”



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