

As billionaires pour millions into second coup, Trump agitates against vote in Pennsylvania

Jacob Crosse
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As part of his fascist campaign to seize the White House regardless of the vote, on Tuesday former president Donald Trump spread lies that mass voter fraud was being committed in Pennsylvania, a state with a population of over 12 million and 19 electoral college votes. Current polling in the “battleground” state shows a virtual tie between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris.

Seeking to sow doubt in the election and gin up his fascist supporters ahead of election day next Tuesday, Trump at multiple venues--an evening rally in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a mid-afternoon speech at his Palm Beach resort Mar-A-Lago and on social media--claimed that “bad” things were happening in the state.

“There is some bad spots in Pennsylvania where some serious things have been caught or are in the process of being caught,” Trump said at Mar-A-Lago, after posting on social media about alleged “fake ballots and forms,” being found in Pennsylvania. In a later post, Trump said that “Law Enforcement is all over the GREAT Commonwealth of Pennsylvania looking at, and for, VOTER FRAUD!”

Trump’s agitation against the vote is not just a personal vendetta, but part of a coordinated, multi-million-dollar effort to install Trump in the White House as president-dictator regardless of the vote totals. Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* published a lengthy report titled: “The Secretive Billionaire Network Funding ‘Stop the Steal’ 2.0.”

The report makes clear that the same Republican mega-donors who bankrolled Trump’s coup less than four years ago have never stopped pushing to re-write election laws, delay vote counts and purge voter rolls in order to ensure that their candidate wins. The newspaper reports that Republican donors have given more than \$140 million to nearly 50 groups focused on “election integrity.” This is a euphemism used by the Republican Party to describe a

massive effort to suppress likely Democratic votes, flood the courts with specious legal claims, delay state and local certification of vote tallies, and mobilize far-right “poll watchers” in Democratic strongholds to threaten and intimidate election officials and voters.

The *Journal* writes that Trump and “his allies have spent the last four years laying the groundwork for a more organized, better funded and far broader effort to contest the outcome—a Stop the Steal 2.0—if the vote doesn’t go his way.”

The current initiatives are not new, but in fact have “been four years in the making.” The newspaper cites an email exchange that took place “[d]ays after the 2020 election” between “conservative scholars,” among them, Carson Holloway of the Claremont Institute. In the email, Holloway told fellow Republicans, “This will have to become another crusade of ours” to “clean up elections for the future.”

For decades, the Claremont Institute has served as an ultra-right den of ideological thought and dictatorial conspiracies. From backing the impeachment of Bill Clinton to providing the pseudo-legal justification for Trump’s January 6, 2021 coup, Claremont’s lawyers have played a major role in the fascist trajectory of the Republican Party.

Over the last four years, so-called “election integrity” efforts have been super-charged with millions of dollars from “dark money” non-profit groups that do not have to publicly identify their well-heeled donors. The *Journal*, citing open records requests, grants and other “publicly disclosed contributions,” identified several billionaires bankrolling the operation.

Among the donors are organizations linked to Wisconsin billionaires Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein and Hobby Lobby founder David Green.

The Uihleins, billionaire founders of Uline packaging, have been among the most influential and generous backers of the Republican Party since the 1990s. In 2023, *Politico* reported that the combined “political giving” of the Uihleins to federal candidates and right-wing causes over the last decade “tops \$230 million, plus tens of million more to state-level groups...”

The *Journal* found that the Uihleins have given “more than \$34 million since 2020 to organizations” involved in “election integrity work.” In August, *Forbes* identified the Uihleins as Trump’s seventh and eighth largest donors.

Another billionaire identified by the *Journal* as behind the effort to overturn the vote is Hobby Lobby founder David Green. The right-wing billionaire, with an estimated net worth of \$13.7 billion, according to *Forbes*, donates generously to The Servant Foundation, an organization that has given more than \$7 million towards the coup effort.

Prior to March 2020, the Servant Foundation had only given \$11,000 to a group called the Conservative Partnership Institute. In 2021, the Conservative Partnership Institute started the Election Integrity Network (EIN), which has been led since its inception by Republican lawyer Cleta Mitchell. In addition to being a “very dear friend” of Virginia Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, Mitchell was on the January 2021 phone call in which Trump badgered Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to “find” him 11,780 votes.

The *Journal* noted that after the EIN was founded, “Servant Foundation’s contributions to the [Conservative Partnership] Institute shot up. It gave \$1 million in the year ending March 2022 and \$5.4 million the year after.” The newspaper noted that the Institute also seeded another \$700,000 to three groups that described themselves as “focusing on election integrity and voter fraud.”

Earlier this year, EIN operatives sought to change Georgia election rules to empower local election officials to unilaterally stop vote counts and delay the certification of vote totals if they had any “reasonable inquires.” Egged on by Mitchell and Trump, the Georgia Election Board also voted to mandate hand-counting of paper ballots at every election site. While the rules passed the Election Board, judges in Georgia have blocked them from going into effect this election.

The effort to suppress the vote and toss out ballots is also being facilitated by Leonard Leo, co-chairman of the

far-right Federalist Society. The *Journal* reported that groups controlled by Leo have given “more than \$4.7 million” toward the campaign to “stop the steal.” Leo is an arch-conservative Catholic who began his career working in the George H.W. Bush White House to push through the nomination of Justice Clarence Thomas. A high-level fixer and fundraiser, Leo currently manages a fund worth an estimated \$1.6 billion.

Other major organizations bankrolling the anti-democratic effort identified by the *Journal* include “Donors Trust, the Bradley Impact Fund and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, which have collectively given more than \$48 million.”

Former Overstock CEO Patrick Byrne is a major booster of Trump’s “stolen election” lies. He provided over \$23 million for the “forensic audit” of Arizona’s 2020 election. Byrne told the *Journal* he had given “as much as \$60 million” to “election-integrity” campaigns, including the America Project, a “nonprofit” run by him and Trump’s former national security advisor, retired Gen. Mike Flynn. The *Journal* did not include the \$60 million as part of the \$140 million identified so far because it hasn’t been publicly disclosed.

In addition to running the America Project, Byrne is leading “America’s Future,” an entity used by Byrne to fund-raise for the Arizona audit and other anti-democratic efforts. Among the largest donors to America’s Future after Byrne took it over in 2021 was Julie Fancelli, billionaire heiress to the Publix Super Markets fortune.

Fancelli also bankrolled Trump’s January 6, 2021 rally at the Ellipse before the attack on the Capitol. Despite being identified as one of the main financiers of the rally, Fancelli was never charged with a crime or obliged to testify before the House January 6 Select Committee.



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