

Trump kickstarts campaign to overturn 2024 election results

Patrick Martin
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Fascist Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump is focusing the last week of his campaign on efforts to undermine and discredit the vote that culminates on November 5, in order to set the stage for an unconstitutional and anti-democratic effort to overturn the result in case he loses.

Trump signaled the beginning of this effort in the course of his remarks to a rally in Madison Square Garden Sunday. He spoke directly to House Speaker Mike Johnson, who was on the platform with him, saying, “I think with our little secret we’re going to do really well with the House, right?,” and adding, “Our little secret is having a big impact. He and I have a little secret—we will tell you what it is when the race is over.”

In a statement to the *New York Times*, Johnson said, “By definition, a secret is not to be shared—and I don’t intend to share this one.”

The likely role of the House of Representatives would be to step in during the period after the election. There are three key dates: December 17, when members of the Electoral College are to meet in each state to cast their votes; December 25, when the Electoral College votes must be submitted to Congress; and January 6, 2025, when Congress meets in joint session to certify the results.

The first two dates fall during the lame-duck period when the Republicans would still control the House, and Johnson would still be speaker, regardless of the outcome of congressional races on November 5. If any state fails to certify its electors by December 25, Johnson could attempt to invalidate its electoral votes entirely, although a speaker’s power to do so has never been asserted before.

Trump has already sought to cast doubt on the validity of the election in several of the so-called “battleground” states, those most closely contested according to pre-election polls.

In Pennsylvania, the most populous of the seven battleground states, with 19 electoral votes, Trump issued a series of postings on his social media site, Truth Social, claiming Wednesday, “Pennsylvania is cheating, and getting caught, at large scale levels rarely seen before.” He

continued Thursday: “We caught them CHEATING BIG in Pennsylvania. Must announce and PROSECUTE, NOW! ... Who would have ever thought that our Country is so CORRUPT?”

Trump was referring to episodes in which election officials identified mistakes and errors in routine administrative matters, and blowing them up into massive scandals. In truth, these were harmless actions carried out in two Republican-controlled counties (York and Lancaster) and one in a narrowly Democratic-controlled county (Bucks), none of which had the slightest electoral significance.

Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt—a Republican appointed by Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro because he had rejected Trump’s claims of vote fraud in Philadelphia in 2020—said there had been a flood of false reports spread over social media. “Sharing social posts filled with half-truths or even outright lies is harmful to our representative democracy,” he said at a press conference, warning that such reports were “likely to continue in the coming days and weeks ahead.”

The *New York Times* reported, “Donald Trump is turning Pennsylvania into ground zero for preemptive claims of a rigged election,” declaring that the purpose of his claims was not to actually affect the election administration but to give political cover for legal challenges to the decision of the voters if he loses the critical state.

As part of a campaign to delay the reporting of election results and create opportunities for court challenges, the Republican-controlled state legislature barred local election officials from counting mail ballots until Election Day, a ban that has not been overturned after Democrats won partial control in 2022. The result is that election returns from Pennsylvania on Tuesday, November 5 will consist largely of same-day, in-person voting, likely to skew in favor of Trump, while mail ballots, more heavily Democratic, will not be counted until Wednesday or even later.

Trump is expected to declare victory on the basis of such early and incomplete results in an effort to whip up his supporters and instigate violence against election officials if

they subsequently report a different outcome.

On a national scale, Trump has issued repeated threats against election officials, culminating in a “CEASE & DESIST” order he posted on Truth Social on October 25, threatening “long term prison sentences” for “Corrupt Election Officials” and anyone who attempted the supposed “Cheating and Skullduggery” of 2020. “WHEN I WIN, those people that CHEATED will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law,” he wrote.

As has been the case ever since Trump’s attempted coup of January 6, 2021, when several thousand of his supporters stormed the Capitol in an effort to block congressional certification of the 2020 election, the Democratic response to his threats and incitement of violence has been to spread complacency about the danger of dictatorship.

Democratic Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania said the election was “secure,” telling *Politico*, “It’s just a big eye roll, and it’s pathetic. ... If they thought they were going to win and they were feeling confident, they wouldn’t be doing this kind of shit.” He added that Trump was no longer in the White House and therefore unable to use the power of the federal government to interfere with the election.

A lengthy commentary in *The Nation* by Elie Mystal outlined a set of scenarios for what the “little secret” between Trump and House Speaker Johnson could mean.

One would involve a “contingent election,” where the House of Representatives chooses the president if there is a tie vote in the Electoral College, 269-269. The House vote would be conducted not by a majority vote of the members, but by a majority vote of state delegations, giving small states inordinate power to determine the outcome, as in the US Senate. The Republicans currently control 26 delegations and the Democrats 23, with one tied, and that is not likely to change November 5.

A more feasible option for the Republicans would be to delay the certification of the electoral votes in states won by Harris but with state governments controlled in whole or in part by the Republicans. (This could include all the battleground states except Michigan.) The sabotage by state-level Republicans could prevent submission of certified results to Congress by the December 25 deadline; Trump and Johnson would seek a ruling by the Republican-dominated US Supreme Court throwing out those states’ electoral votes and reducing the total required to win a majority.

If, for example, Trump were to win only the 219 electoral votes in the states where he currently leads in polling outside the margin of error, he could prevail in the Electoral College by reducing the total number of electoral votes from 538 to 436. This would require delaying certification of Democratic-won states with a total of 102 electoral votes (for example,

the 93 votes of the battleground states combined plus at least one other large state).

If unable to assemble enough states with Republican governors or state legislatures, Trump could make use of the courts, filing challenges even in heavily Democratic states like California and New York, with the bogus claim that millions of illegal immigrants’ votes were cast. The Supreme Court would not have to uphold such a claim, merely drag out the proceedings so that Trump could claim victory.

That Trump could be preparing to make such a claim is hardly a wild hypothesis. At a recent campaign event, former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn claimed that Trump would win all 50 states in a landslide if “illegal” votes were excluded.

And election deniers represent a much more sizeable faction of Republican elected officials than even in 2020, when a large majority of House Republicans voted not to certify Biden’s victory. Election deniers hold high positions in state legislatures and state Republican parties in most of the battleground states.

In a further indication of Trump’s flat rejection of the conventions of American capitalist democracy, even as decrepit as it is, his campaign has not agreed to take part in the official presidential transition process set down in a 2022 law backed by both parties in Congress. This bars the General Services Administration from delaying the transition by refusing to “ascertain” the winner of the election, as it did in 2020 under pressure from the Trump White House. The GSA is now required to begin transition efforts within five days of the election and to cooperate with both parties if neither candidate has conceded.

But Trump has not signed a required ethics pledge or agreements on how the transition would be funded—including the role of outside interests. Nor has his transition team as a whole signed ethics pledges related to possible conflicts of interest.



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