

Facing mounting crisis, Trump reverses course and calls on Republicans to support releasing Epstein files

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Abruptly reversing himself in the face of crumbling support among House Republicans, US President Donald Trump declared Sunday that they should vote for legislation Tuesday that will require the Department of Justice to make public its files on the billionaire convicted sex trafficker.

Trump repeated his declarations that he has “nothing to hide” about his longstanding personal and business relationship with Epstein, who died in a Manhattan prison cell in August 2019 after his second arrest on charges of sex trafficking involving under-age girls.

In that case, however, the obvious question is why Trump has resisted the release of the Epstein files so ferociously for the past nine months. As recently as last Wednesday, Republican Representative Lauren Boebert was taken into the White House situation room—its most secure facility—to be browbeaten by Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel in an attempt to force her to drop her support for a bipartisan effort to obtain the files.

Boebert and three other Republicans—co-sponsor Thomas Massie, Nancy Mace and Marjorie Taylor Greene—joined in a legislative maneuver known as a “discharge petition,” under which a majority of House members can force a vote on a bill which is opposed by the House leadership. Co-sponsor Ro Khanna and 213 other Democrats signed the petition, with the 218th signature coming when Democrat Adelita Grijalva of Arizona was sworn in last week, seven weeks after she won a special election to replace her late father, Raul Grijalva, who died earlier this year.

Conceding defeat, House Speaker Mike Johnson scheduled a vote for Tuesday on the resolution to require the Department of Justice to release the Epstein files. Johnson had rejected calls for a vote on the Epstein files resolution and refused to swear Grijalva into office throughout the federal shutdown—in obvious violation of precedent—in order to block the measure from coming to a vote.

Trump followed suit Sunday, but not before escalating his social media war with the four Republicans who opposed

him on the Epstein bill. He singled out for abuse Marjorie Taylor Greene, one of the most right-wing members of the Republican caucus and a longtime follower of both the fascistic QAnon conspiracy theory and Trump personally.

In his social media postings, Trump called her “Marjorie Traitor Greene” and other slurs, which, however childish in form, have the capacity to incite violence from his fascist followers. Greene told CNN’s “State of the Union” program Sunday that death threats have been sent to both her business and her congressional office, and that her 22-year-old son had been threatened online with assassination.

Greene herself has been responsible for triggering fascist death threats against several “left” Democrats in Congress, including Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, the only two Muslim women in the House, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She once ran a campaign ad depicting herself taking on these Democrats with a semi-automatic rifle.

Trump’s reversal on the Epstein bill makes it a virtual certainty that there will be a near-unanimous vote in the House to pass the legislation, and likely that the bill will be approved by the Senate this month and sent to the White House for Trump’s signature.

In practical terms, the legislation requires the Justice Department to make public the Epstein files with redactions only to protect the privacy of victims. Given that Trump now claims to support the goal of the bill, he could simply direct Attorney General Bondi to do so immediately, without waiting for passage of the bill, since the DOJ operates under his executive authority.

On Friday, while he was still claiming that the Democratic Party was engaged in a purely political attempt to use the Epstein files against him, Trump ordered the DOJ and FBI to open investigations into the links of prominent Democrats with Epstein, specifically naming former president Bill Clinton, former Treasury secretary and Harvard University president Lawrence Summers, and billionaire Democratic donor Reid Hoffman.

All three have been mentioned in emails from Epstein released last week by the House Oversight Committee, mainly in connection with fundraising efforts for Harvard University and the Clinton Global Initiative, where they sought Epstein's aid. There is no indication of connections between the three Democrats and Epstein's sex-trafficking operation, and one email specifically states that Clinton was never on Epstein's private island in the US Virgin Islands, where much of the sexual abuse reportedly took place.

For years, the Epstein case was made a constant theme in fascist Republican and pro-Trump circles, and in conspiracy theories such as QAnon, with the claim that Epstein was a key figure in a pedophile ring that allegedly involved virtually the entire leadership of the Democratic Party.

Trump himself played to this deranged crowd, although his own ties to Epstein were well established and were closer than those of most top Democrats. Among the seedier pieces of evidence to this effect are the note Trump sent to Epstein for his 50th birthday celebration, hinting at shared secrets, and Epstein's email notes that Trump "knew all about the girls" and that he had spent "hours" with one of Epstein's victims.

Moreover, Trump appointed as his secretary of labor the former US attorney in South Florida, Alexander Acosta, who approved the notorious sweetheart deal after Epstein's first sex-trafficking conviction in 2008, which allowed the financier to leave prison every weekday and work from home managing his business operations until he was released on probation, after only 13 months. Acosta was only forced to resign in 2019, after Epstein's second arrest.

Epstein's predatory sex-trafficking and his equally predatory financial manipulations were both carried out in the service of his fellow billionaire oligarchs, and it is this connection that underlies Trump's gyrations on the issue. Whatever his personal involvement in Epstein's abuse—and that remains unproven, although the stench is in the air—Trump is well aware that the sheer scale of the Epstein scandal discredits the entire ruling elite and poses a political danger to the capitalist system as a whole.

Hence his first response, threatening the Democrats that they too could be consumed by the political firestorm that could be ignited. At the same time, the Democrats and powerful sections of the financial aristocracy have seized on the Epstein affair to undermine and weaken Trump and force changes in policy on his administration.

This primarily involves foreign policy, particularly in the war against Russia in Ukraine, and the tariff war against China, Europe and virtually the entire world, which is destabilizing both world trade and the world financial system. There is also, no doubt, a growing concern that the would-be dictator to whom the capitalist class has entrusted

political power is the direct opposite of the "very stable genius" he boasted of being during his first term in office.

Trump has shown visible signs of his 79 years, both mentally and physically, although the ruling class has made do with senile occupants of the White House—both Ronald Reagan and Joe Biden, for example—when their policies conformed to those demanded by Wall Street. In Trump's case, his wild swings from imposing massive tariffs to lifting them, from threats to attack Venezuela and even Nigeria to seeming indifference towards the outcome of the Ukraine war, have undermined his support both on Wall Street and in the national-security establishment.

The Democrats have chosen Epstein as their preferred battleground, within days of bailing out Trump on the federal budget shutdown, because sex scandals can be used to conceal the real issues being fought out within the ruling elite and thus forestall any movement from below. As the WSWS warned last week:

The working class must not be drawn behind either faction in this struggle within the ruling class. The Epstein case does not indict Trump alone—it indict the entire bourgeoisie. It lays bare the corrupt physiognomy of a ruling class that long ago abandoned any connection to democratic principles or social progress. It has handed power to gangsters, frauds and predators.

The working class must intervene in the mounting political crisis on the basis of its own interests, through its own program. The crimes of Epstein are manifestations of a social system that defends private property, class privilege and the political monopoly of a corrupt elite...

What is required is a movement of the working class—armed with a revolutionary socialist program—to put an end to the rule of oligarchs and to build a society based on equality, truth and human dignity.



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