

# Trump denounces California election, defends January 6 attackers

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President Donald Trump walked out of an interview with NBC News when pressed to provide evidence to back up his claims of vote fraud in the California primary election held June 2. The interview was conducted Friday in Wisconsin, where Trump was making a campaign appearance, but major portions were not broadcast until Sunday, on “Meet the Press.”

Trump sought to bully “Meet the Press” moderator Kristen Welker with a stream of verbal abuse, culminating in the remark, “You’re either crooked or you’re stupid.” He then abruptly terminated the discussion, declaring, “Sorry. Let’s call it quits because I’ve had enough.”

The first half of the interview dealt with the war against Iran, with Trump reiterating his threats to destroy the country, boasting of the power of US weaponry, and declaring he would keep tens of thousands of US troops in the Gulf region regardless of any “peace” deal.

It was when the discussion turned to domestic affairs that Trump lost control and began raging against his political opponents and the corporate media. He reiterated his support for a \$1.8 billion slush fund to pay off the supposed victims of the “weaponization” of the Department of Justice under the Biden administration—by which he means the prosecution of those who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021 and sought to overturn Trump’s defeat in the 2020 elections.

Trump expressed frustration over the announcement by acting Attorney General Todd Blanche that the “anti-weaponization” fund was no longer planned, in large part because Senate Republicans feared that providing payments to the January 6 rioters would provoke a political backlash. He said:

If it was up to me, I’d pay them the kind of money that they deserve. People have been destroyed. Lives have been destroyed. Many suicides, think of it. People have committed suicide because a bunch of thugs went after them. So me, personally, I think the weaponization fund is a great idea, and so do many

other Republicans. You have to get it approved. If they get it approved, that’s great. If they don’t get it approved, I’d be disappointed.

Trump expressed no sympathy for the half-dozen suicides among Capitol police traumatized by the violence in which 170 suffered injuries, some disabling. He repeated previous lies about how “radical left lunatics that worked for the Biden administration” persecuted his supporters. He added the claim that FBI agents had escorted the protesters into the Capitol, depicting the attackers as peaceful visitors rather than violent thugs.

His language became abusive, even frenzied, when he turned to the question of the California primary June 2, where votes are still being counted because the state accepts mail-in ballots up to a week after the election, as long as they have been postmarked by election day. Some 80 percent of California votes are cast by mail, and such ballots are harder to count because of damage during transit and because each ballot must be verified as coming from a registered voter.

In a pattern that has become familiar since the onset of COVID-19, Republican voters tend to turn out more heavily in election-day voting, while Democratic voters predominate in the mail balloting. The result is that the Republican candidates for governor of California and mayor of Los Angeles were initially reported as doing well, before the mail ballots counted later boosted the Democratic candidates.

As of this writing, former state attorney general and Health and Human Services secretary Xavier Becerra, a longtime Democratic congressman, was leading the “jungle primary” which winnows the field down to two candidates who will face each other on November 3. Republican Steve Hilton remained in second place, but his lead over Democratic billionaire Tom Steyer was shrinking.

In the mayoral contest, incumbent Democrat Karen Bass was in first place, but Republican Spencer Pratt’s initial lead

over the third-place finisher, Democrat Nithya Raman, has been nearly erased. Raman, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, was expected to overtake Pratt once the remaining outstanding ballots were tabulated. That would make the November 3 election a contest between two Democrats—a not uncommon outcome in California, long dominated by the Democratic Party.

Trump lost the 2020 election in a similar fashion, when mail ballots erased his initial lead in battleground states like Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and tipped those electoral votes to Democrat Joe Biden. Ever since, Trump has claimed—with zero evidence—that vote fraud by the Democrats had deprived him of victory.

In his interview with NBC, he voiced similar claims in relation to California. An excerpt of the transcript reads:

WELKER: The Republicans are doing well in California.

TRUMP: In California, it's, no they're not. They're dropping fast because it's a rigged election. Let me tell you, it's four days and they aren't even close to coming up with the –

WELKER: That's how they count the votes in California.

TRUMP: Do you know why they're doing that? Because they're cheating on the election.

WELKER: There's—What? Do you have evidence to support that?

TRUMP: It's—all I have to do is look. All I have to do is look.

WELKER: But that's not evidence.

TRUMP: And I listen. And I listen to people. And let's see what happens.

WELKER: But sir, that's not evidence—

Then the interview veered to an abrupt end, with Trump denouncing both California Democrats and the media.

TRUMP: They're crooked just like you're crooked, your press is crooked. And Meet the Press is crooked.

WELKER: To be fair, I'm not crooked. But let's continue.

TRUMP: Really? Well, you play right into their hands then.

WELKER: Let's continue.

TRUMP: You're either crooked or you're stupid.

WELKER: Let's continue.

TRUMP: You play right into their hands with this stuff. You know that these elections are rigged. Your network knows that they're rigged... Your elections are crooked and you're crooked, and Meet the Press is crooked.

WELKER: But Mr. President—

TRUMP: And so is ABC and CBS and CNN.

WELKER: But Mr. President—

TRUMP: You're a one-sided crooked network. Sorry. Let's call it quits because I've had enough. Thank you, darling. Have a good time.

This exchange was far more than just a Trump temper tantrum. The US Attorney's office in Los Angeles said it has opened "multiple election fraud investigations," claiming the California election system has "serious structural vulnerabilities." First Assistant US Attorney Bill Essayli wrote on X late Friday—a few hours after Trump's interview had concluded—"My office will not look the other way. We will investigate and prosecute."

Trump's unrestrained hatred of anyone who either opposes him or questions him—even in the mild tones of a Kristen Welker—is not merely the characteristic of an increasingly unhinged authoritarian personality. The sweeping claims of vote fraud are an ominous warning of what is to come as the midterm elections unfold amid growing popular opposition and mounting global crises involving war, financial chaos and environmental disaster.

Trump's popularity continues to plunge, with polls suggesting he has reached the lowest point for any president since the depths touched by George W. Bush during the Iraq War. The White House has no intention of submitting placidly to a popular repudiation at the polls. On the contrary, with its wild claims of vote fraud and its embrace of fascist claims that millions of "illegal aliens" will go to the polls in November, the Trump administration is preparing either to challenge the results of the election or suspend elections altogether.



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