

2 weeks out, Trump steps up threats over mid-term election

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The US Department of Justice announced Monday that it had charged 28 California residents, all legal immigrants with residency status or green cards, with violating federal election laws, as part of the Trump administration's campaign to discredit the November 3 mid-term election where the Republican Party is expecting major defeats.

Of the 28 indicted, the DOJ claimed that 21 had voted illegally in past elections in California, a state where 16 million people cast ballots in the 2024 presidential election. Eleven of the 28 have been arrested.

The indictments and arrests follows last week's letter from Acting US Deputy Attorney General Trent McCotter claiming that 20,000 people on the state's voter rolls are "likely noncitizens," although he presented no evidence that any of them had actually attempted to vote or had the intention of voting.

The letter accompanied a lawsuit filed by the administration against the state of California and Los Angeles County, seeking a court order requiring election officials to set aside any mail ballots cast by any of the 20,000 identified by the DOJ. McCotter threatened in his letter that California officials who refused to comply could be criminally investigated and prosecuted.

"If persons knowingly tabulate ballots cast by individuals identified by federal agencies as noncitizens, they risk becoming aiders and abettors to a federal crime," he said.

President Trump declared on social media, referring to California election officials, "They will all go to jail for a long period of time!" The comment accompanied his reposting of the letter from McCotter to the state and Los Angeles County.

In pursuit of its "big lie" about mass illegal voting, the Trump administration has inflated a handful of cases into a national emergency. Over the last two months, the DOJ has filed charges against 113 people in 20 states for violating election laws, in a country where more than 150 million people voted in the last presidential election, and more than 100 million are expected to cast ballots by November 3.

More than 10 million votes have already been cast by mail

ballot or in early voting, which began in Texas, the second-largest US state, on Monday. Most voting in California, the largest state, is conducted by mail, a system that Trump has baselessly denounced as corrupt and rigged by the Democrats, although Republican-controlled states like Utah also rely on it.

Both Los Angeles and California election officials rejected the demand to set aside ballots on the list of 20,000 people supplied by the DOJ. "We cannot withhold or refuse to count ballots based solely on unverified allegations," Los Angeles County Clerk Dean Logan said in a statement, adding that the agency had not provided its "underlying evidence, source, or methodology supporting its assertions that individuals identified in its records are ineligible to vote."

California Secretary of State Shirley Weber wrote: "As you fully acknowledge, ballots have already been delivered to voters and voting is well underway ... Despite this, and with less than three weeks before the election, you are demanding unprecedented measures that threaten thousands of Californians' right to vote, based on unverifiable information or methodology that you still fail to explain or provide."

She continued: "California's election administration will continue to be governed by applicable federal and state law, not by unsubstantiated claims and outrageous demands. ... I will not disenfranchise thousands of Californians—or order any county elections official to do so—based solely upon an unsupported and likely inaccurate 'belief' that certain voters are 'likely' noncitizens."

Given that the number of voters being challenged could not possibly affect the result of the election, it seems certain that the White House chose to target California in order to generate a public conflict with Democratic Party election officials which it could use as a pretext for more drastic and even extralegal measures.

Time has run out on Trump's efforts to suppress mail-ballot voting, but the administration is still seeking to intimidate voters through the well-publicized arrests. More

importantly, it is creating a pretext for discrediting the election and delegitimizing the expected Democratic victory at the polls.

The *New York Times* referred to such a possibility in an article published Friday, under the headline, “Trump’s Attacks on Voting Raise Fears He Will Try to Challenge Midterm Results.” The article stated:

Trump’s longstanding attacks on the integrity of voting systems are crystallizing into what many election officials and Democrats fear is an attempt to lay the groundwork to challenge the results in November.

The result, election officials fear, could be an effort by administration officials to try to contest results that do not favor Republicans by citing their own findings that the vote is tainted.

Trump met this month in the White House with Tina Peters, a former Colorado county clerk who was convicted of tampering with voting machines after the 2020 election, to discuss “election integrity.” Peters has been a vocal advocate of claims that voting machines have been hacked by foreign countries seeking to defeat Republicans.

At virtually every campaign rally, Trump has repeated the lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, and urged Republican election officials and prosecutors to crack down on supposed “illegal” voting by immigrants.

Trump has refused to rule out invoking the Insurrection Act to deploy troops and federal agents at the polls. He repeated such comments after the Supreme Court blocked his executive order purporting to assert federal control over the elections, in defiance of the US Constitution, which assigns the primary role to the states.

Even more drastic is the continuing effort to denaturalize and deport Democratic Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, a four-term member of the House of Representatives from Minneapolis, who is expected to win re-election easily on November 3. Agents of Homeland Security Investigations, the criminal investigation arm of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), raided Omar’s home in Washington D.C. a week ago, seizing electronic equipment and documents.

On Saturday, White House “border czar” Tom Homan confirmed that the goal of the investigation into Omar was to revoke her citizenship and expel her from the country. Speaking to Fox News, he said, “Of course, if you lie during the naturalization process, there is a process to denaturalize somebody,” adding, “And certainly, if the evidence points

that way, that could happen.”

The reported focus of the HSI is paperwork filed by Omar’s father, now dead, when his family was admitted to the United States as refugees from the civil war in Somalia exacerbated by US military intervention. Omar was a teenager when she became a US citizen.

The action against Omar is so flagrantly illegal and unconstitutional that it generated a rebuke from former President Barack Obama, who wrote on X Sunday morning that “the full weight of the federal government is being brought down on a law-abiding elected official because she has dared to criticize the president.”

Obama described the investigation into Omar as “appalling,” adding, “The fact that any president, or any administration, is willing to engage in such transparent efforts to intimidate someone should outrage all Americans, regardless of how they feel about Congresswoman Omar’s political views.”

Obama is hardly a credible defender of democratic rights. As president, he claimed the right to assassinate American citizens without charge or trial. In 2011 he ordered the drone strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, and two weeks later another strike killed al-Awlaki’s 16-year-old son. His administration deported more people than any before it. Trump is using the apparatus of mass deportation, surveillance and executive killing that Democratic and Republican administrations built together.

In any case, Obama’s statement was the exception. The Democratic congressional leadership put out a statement after the raid and then dropped the matter. A week after federal agents searched the home of a Democratic member of Congress, none of the Democrats on the Sunday interview programs mentioned it: not Senator Raphael Warnock on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, Florida Senate nominee Angie Nixon on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, or Maine Senate candidate Troy Jackson on CNN’s *State of the Union*.

The Democrats fear a mass movement against the administration far more than they fear Trump. Their sharpest attacks on him have been over the war against Russia, most recently his deal on Russian diesel, which they denounce as a betrayal of Ukraine. On the attack on the vote, they rely on the courts and state election officials, while the administration openly prepares to contest the results of November 3.



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