

As Trump co-plotter Steve Bannon receives lenient sentence

## January 6 House Select Committee subpoenas former President Donald Trump

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On Friday, the January 6 House Select Committee charged with investigating the attack on Congress formally issued a subpoena to ex-President Donald J. Trump.

The committee is requesting that Trump provide documentation by November 4, four days before the mid-term elections, and appear for testimony on November 14.

In a letter signed by the chairman of the committee, Bennie Thompson (Democrat-Mississippi), and vice chair Liz Cheney (Republican-Wyoming), the pair wrote that Trump “personally orchestrated and oversaw a multi-part effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election and to obstruct the peaceful transition of power.”

According to the committee, Trump’s efforts to overturn the election included:

- Purposely and maliciously disseminating false allegations of fraud;
- Attempting to corrupt the Department of Justice, including by enlisting DoJ officials to make false statements and aid Trump’s coup plot;
- Illegally pressuring state officials and legislators to change the results of the election in their state;
- Orchestrating and overseeing an effort to obtain and transmit false electoral certificates to Congress and the National Archives;
- Illegally and corruptly pressuring Vice President Mike Pence to unilaterally refuse to count electoral votes during Congress’s joint session on January 6th;
- Pressuring members of Congress to object to valid slates of electors from several states;
- Filing false information, under oath, in federal court;
- Summoning tens of thousands of supporters to

Washington D.C., including armed supporters, and sending them to the Capitol;

- Telling his supporters, which included Oath Keeper and Proud Boy militia groups, that Pence did not have the “courage to do what should have been done” as the Capitol was under attack;

- Refusing for hours to disband the mob and instruct them to leave the Capitol, while watching the attack unfold on television.

Addressing the aspiring dictator, who has yet to be charged with a crime more than 21 months after orchestrating the attack, Thompson and Cheney wrote: “In short you were at the center of the first and only effort by any US President to overturn an election and obstruct the peaceful transition of power, ultimately culminating in a bloody attack on our own Capitol and on the Congress itself.”

It is unlikely that Trump will ever appear before the committee or provide the documentation it has requested. The committee is set to dissolve at the end of the year and given the distinct possibility that the Democratic Party will lose control of the House of Representatives in the mid-term elections, a Republican-controlled House will make sure it is disbanded and rescind any subpoenas.

Prior to the committee issuing its subpoena of Trump, in a brief sentencing hearing Friday morning, US District Court Judge for the District of Columbia Carl J. Nichols ordered former Trump White House advisor Stephen K. Bannon to spend four months in prison.

Bannon was found guilty on two counts of criminal contempt of Congress this past July.

The four-month sentence handed down by Nichols is two months less than the wrist-slap US prosecutors

recommended earlier this week. For refusing to provide a single document or answer one question from the January 6 House Select Committee, Bannon could have been sentenced up to one year in prison and fined \$100,000 on each count of contempt, meaning he could have spent two years in prison and been fined \$200,000 in total.

Instead, Nichols only fined Bannon \$6,500, and it is entirely possible the host of the far-right “War Room” podcast will not spend a single day in a jail cell. In an extraordinary gift to Bannon and an example of class “justice” in the United States, Judge Nichols granted Bannon’s request to remain free while he files his appeal, which could take months, or even years.

Normally, after you are found guilty and sentenced you are immediately remanded by the court and sent to jail or prison intake. If for some remote, and highly implausible, reason, Bannon or his lawyers failed to file his appeal within two weeks, he would have to begin serving his sentence on November 15, 2022.

In imposing the weak sentence, Nichols said that in his view, “Mr. Bannon has not taken responsibility for his actions,” and that “Others must be deterred from committing similar crimes.” Yet Nichols also credited Bannon for communicating with the committee through his lawyer and for his previous service in the US Navy. Nichols also noted Bannon’s fascist podcast and his previous role in the Trump administration, which he apparently viewed in a positive light.

After Nichols ruled that Bannon, who refused to speak during the court proceedings, would be allowed to remain free pending an appeal, courtroom reporters noticed that Bannon allowed a smirk to cross his face. Once he was outside the courtroom, Bannon delivered another fascist diatribe attacking the House Select Committee and Trump’s political enemies.

“Today was my judgment day by the judge,” Bannon said. “We will have a very vigorous appeals process... On November 8, they are going to have judgment on the illegitimate Biden regime and quite frankly, [Democratic House Speaker] Nancy Pelosi and the entire committee.” Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence were the top two politicians targeted by Trump’s right-wing mob that attacked the Capitol on January 6.

Judge Nichols, 52, was appointed to the district court by Trump in 2019. After graduating from the University of Chicago Law School in 1996, he served

as a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Nichols and Thomas are both members of the right-wing Federalist Society, which is led by wealthy right-wing lawyer Leonard Leo.

All three of the Supreme Court justices Trump appointed during his term, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett and Neil Gorsuch, are members of the Federalist Society and were on a preselected list presented to Trump by Leo prior to his becoming president in 2016.

The outcome of Bannon’s contempt trial has only served to strengthen the Republican right. On his “War Room” podcast less than an hour after the sentencing hearing, Bannon gloated with former Trump advisor Peter Navarro and neo-Nazi Jack Posobiec. Navarro is set to go to trial next month on his contempt of Congress charges.

The failure of the Democratic Party and the US Department of Justice to hold Trump and his co-conspirators accountable for trying to overthrow the government and install a dictatorship—not to mention their continued defense of the coup and ongoing plot to establish a fascist dictatorship—underscores the fecklessness of the Democrats and their inability to defend democratic rights.

That task falls to the working class in the struggle for socialism.



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