

Campaigning in Iowa, Trump calls on supporters to become “poll watchers” and “challengers”

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In his first campaign-style rally since the near-fatal attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, former US president Donald Trump accused the Democrats of cheating in the midterm elections and called on his right-wing supporters to become “poll challengers and poll watchers.”

Speaking Thursday night in Sioux City, Iowa, Trump did not back down from his usual violent rhetoric. He began his speech by telling the few thousand people in attendance, “We are going to end crazy Nancy Pelosi’s political career once and for all.”

Neither Trump nor any of the other Republicans who spoke at the rally denounced the attack on Paul Pelosi, carried out by a fascistic Trump supporter who was targeting the House speaker. Either they ignored it or attempted to place the blame, by implication, on the Biden administration and the Democrats, calling it just another example of a crime wave caused by the supposed invasion of criminal aliens across the “open” southern border.

It was also Trump’s first speech since Biden’s nationally televised address on Wednesday denouncing Trump and MAGA Republicans for inciting violence and refusing to accept defeat at the polls.

Seeking to sow chaos and doubt before the midterm elections on November 8, Trump rehashed the same incitements and lies he has been telling since the 2016 campaign. He claimed that his opponents were not just wrong, but “sick, corrupt” and “evil.” Trump claimed, without evidence, that mail-in ballots were inherently unreliable and susceptible to fraud.

Instead of voting early, Trump called on his supporters to “swamp” the polling stations on Election Day. “We need a landslide so big that the radical left cannot rig it or steal it,” he hissed.

“If you care about election integrity, volunteer as an election worker, poll watcher, or poll challenger. We need you,” he added.

“Election integrity” is a euphemism Trump and his right-wing supporters use to describe as fraudulent any vote not cast for Trump or his “Make America Great Again” loyalists.

Trump’s call for his supporters to show up in person at polling stations has been repeated on the far-right War Room podcast, hosted by former Trump special adviser Stephen Bannon.

The moves by Trump and the Republicans to disrupt the vote and intimidate likely Democratic voters prompted the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the US Capitol Police and the National Counter-Terrorism Center to release a joint alert last week warning that domestic extremists “pose a heightened threat to the 2022 midterm elections” and that election workers and officials are “attractive” targets.

Last month, the Department of Justice (DoJ) announced charges against Iowa resident Mark Rissi, 64. Rissi was arrested for sending threatening messages to an election official in Maricopa County, Arizona. According to the DoJ press release, one of the threatening voicemails was for Clint Hickman, a member of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.

“When we come to lynch your stupid lying Commie [expletive], you’ll remember that you lied on the [expletive] Bible, you piece of sh*t,” Rissi said, according to the DoJ. “You’re gonna die, you piece of sh*t. We’re going to hang you. We’re going to hang you.”

The embrace of Trump’s election lies by virtually the entire Republican Party, and the normalization of political violence, were most sharply expressed at Thursday’s rally in comments made by Georgia representative and QAnon fascist Marjorie Taylor Greene, a regular at Trump’s rallies.

In her speech, Greene goaded the crowd into booing Paul Pelosi, who was only released from San Francisco General Hospital on Thursday. After blaming Democrats for the “highest crime in decades,” Greene complained that the “only

crime victim you hear about from Democrats in the media is Paul Pelosi.”

“Paul Pelosi was brutally attacked by a drugged-out illegal alien that should have been deported,” said Greene.

Hailing Trump as the Republican Party’s “one true leader,” Greene ended her speech by calling for a purge of all Republican officials who balk at declaring unconditional fealty to the would-be Führer.

“We can no longer be the party of Mitch McConnell, John McCain, Dick Cheney, George Bush and Mitt Romney... or any other sellout weak Republican,” she said.

Giving the lie to Biden’s claim in his address on Wednesday that MAGA Republicans comprise only a small part of the Republican Party, Trump and Greene were joined at Thursday’s rally by the longest-serving member of the US Senate, Iowa’s Chuck Grassley.

The 89-year-old senator is up for re-election and is currently leading his Democratic opponent, Michael Franken, a retired three-star Navy admiral, by roughly three percentage points, according to the latest polling.

In his comments, Grassley thanked Trump for coming to Iowa and attacked Biden, who has bent over backwards to appease his “Republican colleagues,” for being “divisive,” i.e., raising the attempted coup of January 6 and warning of the ongoing conspiracy headed by Trump to establish a fascist dictatorship.

Speaking to Trump, Grassley said, “You kept your word,” while, “Biden, who said he was going to unite America, has done everything to divide America.”

In her remarks at the rally, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds mimicked Trump’s attacks on immigrants while boasting that as governor she “banned mask and vaccine mandates.”

Showing no concern for the over 10,000 Iowans who have succumbed needlessly to the coronavirus, Reynolds boasted, “We stayed open and got our kids back into the classroom!”

The Republican candidate for Iowa attorney general, Brenna Bird, received Trump’s “complete and total endorsement” Thursday after she declared her support for Trump’s “stolen election” lie. Bird began her speech by attacking her Democratic opponent, Tom Miller, for not supporting “voter ID or election integrity.”

Biden and the Democrats’ impotent calls for the population to vote to “defend democracy” are completely hollow. According to CNBC, US billionaires have spent \$880 million this election cycle buying their preferred candidates and

policies in both parties. The figure, already 44 percent more than in 2018, according to Americans for Tax Fairness, is expected to exceed \$1 billion sometime next week.

Any attempts by workers to combat the attacks on their living standards by striking for better wages, health care and working conditions are virtually outlawed, as seen in the struggles of rail, dock and airline workers in the US.

Meanwhile, Trump and allies like Marjorie Taylor Greene are increasingly seeking to whip up anti-Semitism in line with their efforts to mobilize far-right forces. Trump now concludes every rally with piped-in music associated with the QAnon narrative of the “storm” that will sweep away the “globalists,” which is understood in those circles as a reference to Jews.

Prior to Trump’s rally on Thursday, the FBI office in Newark, New Jersey issued an unprecedented warning saying that the agency had received “credible information” of a “broad threat” to synagogues throughout the state of New Jersey.

“We ask at this time that you take all security precautions to protect your community and facility,” a tweet from the agency read.

On Friday morning, the FBI released another tweet saying that the agency had located the “source of the threat.” In a conference call with 500 Jewish leaders and New Jersey Governor Philip Murphy, FBI special agent James Dennehy revealed that the FBI had identified and questioned “for hours” a man with “radical extremist views” who was the source of the threats.

“He expressed radical, extremist views and ideology, as well as an extreme amount of hate against the Jewish community,” Dennehy said, according to a report in the *New York Times*. As of his writing, no other information has been released, including if the man has been arrested or charged.



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