

Billionaire Musk declares allegiance to Trump and “dark MAGA” at Butler, Pennsylvania rally

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Eighty-four days after former President Donald Trump was nearly assassinated by a 20-year-old sniper, the Republican nominee for president returned to Butler, Pennsylvania to hold a large rally just over a month before the November 5 election.

Pennsylvania, with its 19 electoral votes, is viewed by both the Democratic and Republican campaigns as a “must win” state. Nearly all of the polling conducted after Vice President Kamala Harris replaced President Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic ticket shows both Harris and Trump virtually tied in Pennsylvania at 47 percent.

The Butler rally featured several tributes, memorials and prayers to commemorate the victims of the July shooting. While Trump was grazed in the ear, two people were critically injured and Corey Comperatore, a 50-year-old Trump supporter, husband and father of two, was killed.

In addition to honoring Comperatore, almost every speaker referenced the near-miss of Trump as proof that God himself was watching over the former president so that he could win the election and restore American “greatness” under the banner of “Make America Great Again.”

To this end, the rally featured, for the first time, an in-person appearance by major Trump donor and the world’s richest promoter of fascism, Elon Musk.

Since Musk’s preferred right-wing authoritarian, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, exited the presidential race in January 2024, the billionaire CEO of Tesla and Space X, and owner of X/Twitter, has opened up the money spigot for Trump. According to recent reporting from Bloomberg, Musk’s super political action committee, America PAC, has spent over \$71 million supporting Trump in the 2024 election.

A recent analysis from the *Washington Post* found that the Musk-backed PAC had “nearly quadrupled” its pro-Trump advertising on X since August, spending nearly \$161,000. The *Post* reported that the Trump campaign is also spending heavily on the social media site; one Trump campaign account has spent over \$700,000 on fundraising appeals as of October 1.

Business Insider reported last month that Musk’s PAC is spending millions to support at least 14 Republicans in their congressional races, in addition to Trump himself. The publication

reported that Musk’s PAC is “spending heavily on both digital ads and canvassing operations. In each instances, the PAC is spending an equal amount on boosting the GOP candidate and going negative on the Democratic candidate.”

Seeking to entice workers and the poor to back Trump’s campaign, on Monday following the rally, Musk’s America PAC began circulating a petition calling supporters of “Free Speech & Bear Arms!” to recruit “swing state” voters to sign the petition. The PAC is promising to pay each referral \$47, with a goal of 1 million voters.

Boosted by the notoriety of the location and the financial backing of Musk, the number of attendees at Saturday’s rally was estimated by the Secret Service at roughly 21,000 people. This is quite a bit higher than the usual Trump events, which usually garner a few thousand supporters, many of them repeat attendees.

Trump began his remarks with tributes to the victims of the shooting before pivoting to his usual fascist rants promising mass deportations targeting immigrants from “the Congo, from Yemen” who he characterized as “murderers” and “terrorists,” as well as an extended rant about the danger of the “enemy from within” by which he means any who oppose his authoritarian agenda.

About halfway through his remarks Trump brought a jubilant Musk up on to the stage. Before he began speaking, the deranged billionaire, dressed all in black, literally leaped onto the platform. Musk began his comments by pointing to the black “Make America Great Again” baseball cap he was wearing and declaring, “As you can see, I’m not just MAGA, I’m dark MAGA.”

“Dark MAGA,” is not just a different color, but a more right-wing and openly fascist version of the modern Trump-American fascist movement. Dark MAGA aesthetics and memes have been embraced by QAnon and neo-Nazi elements within the Trump movement, who are calling on Trump to enact vengeance on his political enemies with violence.

Writing on the emergence of “Dark MAGA” on far-right message boards and online spaces in April 2022, Hampton Stall and Daniel Grober for Global Network on Extremism & Technology observed:

Dark MAGA appears to be more of an overarching banner of multiple divergent groups and ideologies, often at odds with themselves. Neo-Nazi iconography sits squarely next to red MAGA hats and Odinitic depictions of Donald Trump. For this reason, “Dark MAGA” can be seen as an umbrella that is accepting of, rather than a direct derivative from, ideas and symbology of the “Iron March” networks.

Stall and Grober noted that Dark MAGA images and videos “have a red-and-black or red-and-blue edit over photos,” adding, “[f]igures may be given laser eyes, usually in a light blue shade. Sonnenrads, swastikas, and wolfsangels often accompany the image, which might also have a not-so-veiled threat of violence or revenge. Trump is heavily featured...”

Iron March was the largest neo-Nazi and fascist forum on the internet until it was shut down in 2017. Now much of the content that was on those forums is freely spread on Musk’s X. A simple search for #DarkMAGA on the platform returned thousands of examples of Trump, and now Musk, bathed in red and black with glowing laser eyes, threatening violence against their political opponents.

After declaring his fascist allegiance to Trump, Musk gushed over the aspiring dictator’s reaction to the Butler assassination, recalling that Trump said “Fight! Fight! Fight!” while “blood” was “coming down the face.”

Musk implored attendees to register to vote, while at the same time stoking militia elements. He said the “other side wants to take away your freedom of speech, your right to bear arms.” Lending succor to Trump and the Republican’s fascist lies that “illegal aliens” are voting across the country for Democrats, Musk declared:

They want to take away your right to vote, effectively. You have 14 states now that don’t require voter ID. California, where I used to live, just a passed a law banning voter ID. How are you supposed to have a proper election if there is no ID? Meaningless.

Claims by Trump and the Republicans of mass voter fraud benefiting Democrats have no basis in reality. The right-wing Heritage Foundation, which has been tracking voter fraud prosecutions for decades, has documented only 1,561 cases of voter fraud out of hundreds of millions of votes.

In the most populous state in the Union, California, Heritage has claimed to have documented 55 “election fraud cases” dating back to 1993. According to the California Secretary of State’s office, since the November 2010 midterm elections, over 87 million people have cast ballots in statewide general elections. In the state of Texas, Heritage identified just 103 cases of election fraud between 2005 and 2022. Over that time period, over 107 million

ballots were cast, including 11 million ballots in the 2020 presidential election.

Musk ended his remarks declaring that “President Trump must win to preserve the constitution. He must win to preserve democracy in America,” before ominously warning that November’s election would be “the last election” if Trump did not win.

Prior to Musk and Trump’s appearance, Ohio Senator and Trump’s running mate, JD Vance, in a theme that was repeated throughout the rally, blamed Democrats for the attempts on Trump’s life. Vance said that, “Even after that terrible assassination attempt that took one man’s life and nearly took many others, they,” referring to Democrats, “continue to use dangerous, inflammatory rhetoric.”

Eric Trump also blamed Democrats for the attempts on his father’s life, saying:

They tried to get my father every single second since he went down that golden escalator... They tried to smear us, they tried to bankrupt us, they came after us. They impeached him twice, they went after his Supreme Court justices, they weaponized the entire legal system... Far-left AGs, far-left DAs in every far-left place in this country went after my father. They tried to pull him off the ballot... And then guys, they tried to kill him. They tried to kill him and it’s because the Democratic Party they can’t do anything right. They can’t do anything right.

Trump himself also explicitly blamed Democrats for the shooting, saying:

Over the past eight years, those who want to stop us from achieving this future have slandered, impeached me, and indicted me, tried to throw me off the ballot and, who knows, maybe even tried to kill me. But I’ve never stopped fighting for you and I never will.

In an appearance on ABC’s *This Week* with George Stephanopoulos on Sunday, Speaker of the House Mike Johnson refused to condemn statements at the rally by either Eric Trump or his father that Democrats were behind the attempted assassination in Butler in July. Despite Stephanopoulos’s repeated attempts to solicit a condemnation, Johnson refused, saying he needed more “context.”



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