

Trump vows to continue anti-constitutional rampage, as Democrats do nothing

Patrick Martin
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Three weeks since the inauguration of Donald Trump for a second term as US president, his fascist assault on constitutional and legal norms is escalating.

Trump reiterated his expansionist plans for American imperialism in an interview with Fox News on the Sunday broadcast before the Super Bowl. He confirmed that he was “serious” about seeking to annex Canada as the 51st state. While flying to New Orleans on Air Force One, Trump signed an executive order declaring February 9 to be “Gulf of America” day, in honor of his supposed renaming of the Gulf of Mexico.

In a major escalation of economic warfare against the entire world, Trump said he would sign an executive order Monday to impose 25 percent tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports, including those from Canada and Mexico. He said that later in the week, “probably Tuesday or Wednesday,” he would announce “reciprocal tariffs” on other imports from countries that have tariffs in place on US-made goods.

Based on tallies published in the corporate media, Trump has defied or flouted more than a dozen federal laws as well as numerous clauses of Article I and Article II of the Constitution, and the First, Fifth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. More than 40 lawsuits have been filed against his actions, and seven federal district court judges have already issued orders blocking various actions of the new administration.

The sheer scale of this assault on constitutional legality led one influential commentator, Karen Tumulty of the *Washington Post* editorial board, to write: “To say that what is happening now is a constitutional crisis is to put it too mildly. Let’s call it what it is: a constitutional collapse.”

Far from asserting congressional authority, she noted, the Republican leaders in the House and Senate were “supine,” while rubber-stamping such Trump

nominations as anti-vaxxer Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. at the Department of Health and Human Services and former Fox News host and defender of war criminals Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon.

The *New York Times* published a lead article Sunday on its website under the headline, “Why Federal Courts May Be the Last Bulwark Against Trump,” contrasting the large number of lower court rulings against Trump’s executive orders to the collaboration of Congress, the impotence of the Democratic Party and what it portrayed as “mostly quiet streets.”

The last reference is both false and misleading. There have been significant protests against Trump’s attacks on immigrants, as well as against the mass firing of federal government workers. It is the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus that have done nothing to mobilize opposition to Trump’s actions, instead channeling all opposition to Trump into lawsuits filed in federal courts.

This is bound up with the class character of the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus. The essential class content of Trump’s actions has become clear over the past week, as the assault on immigrant workers has been followed by the assault on federal workers and all social programs.

On Friday, Trump fired Federal Election Commission Chair Ellen Weintraub and announced plans to replace the board members of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts with his own appointees, making himself chairman and granting himself authority to ban performances he opposes.

On Saturday, Russell Vought, Trump’s newly confirmed Office of Management and Budget chief, halted all funding to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and ordered its headquarters shut down.

Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* reported that Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) had installed agents in 15 government departments, including Energy, Education, Labor and Health and Human Services.

Musk's operatives now control the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the General Services Administration (GSA, where they are reportedly planning to sell off half of federally owned real estate) and the Social Security Administration. Trump justified cutting Social Security rolls by falsely claiming that "illegal immigrants" were receiving benefits, though undocumented workers pay into Social Security but cannot collect.

Early Saturday, Federal Judge Paul Engelmayer barred Musk aides without proper security clearances from accessing the Treasury Department's payment system. The aides included a Silicon Valley multi-millionaire tied to Musk and a 25-year-old IT specialist with a history of racist, anti-Asian posts. The judge set a hearing for next Friday, when 19 states will challenge Trump's executive order. Musk called for the judge's impeachment, while Trump dismissed the ruling as "crazy."

While the leadership of the Democratic Party knows full well the depths of the assault being made by the Trump White House on democratic rights and constitutional norms, the Democrats have limited themselves to, at most, minor moaning and groaning. There have been no calls to arms from ex-presidents Biden, Obama or Clinton, from the current congressional leaders Schumer and Jeffries, or others like Kamala Harris, Nancy Pelosi and Bernie Sanders.

Only three months ago, Harris and Tim Walz received 75 million votes, losing by a small margin to Trump and JD Vance, who received 77.3 million votes. The Democrats control 47 out of 100 seats in the Senate, and 215 out of 435 in the House. Under equivalent conditions, Republican minorities have been able to virtually paralyze Democratic administrations—or at least provide Democratic presidents with a useful pretext for carrying out right-wing pro-corporate policies. But today's Democratic minority acts as though it is powerless.

This is partly to conceal their agreement with the bulk of Trump's fascistic program, particularly on the promotion of economic nationalism and trade war,

major cuts to social programs, and support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza and imperialist war more generally. At the same time, the Democrats fear that even token opposition could trigger a mass upheaval that would swiftly escape their control.

For the time being, the Democrats are using the myriad lawsuits filed against Trump's actions as an argument for taking no other action. For his part, Trump has filed appeals of lower court orders, confident that his fascist majority on the Supreme Court, including three justices he nominated himself, will ultimately uphold his decrees. But there is no reason to believe that Trump will not ultimately defy court orders if they are upheld on appeal. Vice President Vance tweeted Saturday that judicial interference with executive actions would be illegal. "Judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power," he said.

There is only one social force with the power to oppose and defeat the fascist rampage emanating from the White House: That is the American working class, united with the working class of North, Central and South America and the entire world, in a common struggle against the capitalist system. The Socialist Equality Party (US) and our co-thinkers around the world are fighting to mobilize the international working class on the basis of a socialist program against the threats of fascism, capitalist austerity and imperialist war.



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