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As election approaches, Trump conspires to repudiate popular vote

With the US election less than one week away, the Trump administration is engaged in a conspiracy to remain in office even if Trump loses the popular vote.

The ramming through of the nomination of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, who was officially sworn in yesterday, is central to this strategy. To oversee the White House ceremony the previous evening, Trump chose Justice Clarence Thomas, the only remaining justice on the court who was part of the majority that decided the 2000 election case of *Bush v. Gore*. In that decision, the court ruled 5-4 to stop a recount of votes in Florida and hand the election to Bush, who lost the popular vote.

The message could not be clearer: Barrett is to assist the court in a similar operation 20 years later. To underscore this point, the Supreme Court ruled the same day that the battleground state of Wisconsin cannot count mail-in ballots postmarked before Election Day but received after November 3. The decision, which robs tens or hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin residents of the right to vote, is a major victory for Trump and provides critical political support to his efforts to challenge results throughout the country.



President Donald J. Trump delivers remarks during the swearing-in ceremony for Amy Coney Barrett as Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. (Image credit: Joyce N. Boghosian/ White House Flickr)

In an opinion concurring with the majority, Trump nominee Brett Kavanaugh repeated Trump's baseless claim that mail-in voting is susceptible to fraud: "States want to avoid the chaos and suspicions of impropriety that can ensue if thousands of absentee ballots flow in after Election Day and potentially flip the results of an election." That is, states want to avoid the "chaos" caused by counting all the votes.

Kavanaugh favorably cited the *Bush v. Gore* decision. In the 2000 case, the court explicitly stated that the ruling could not be used as the precedent in future court decisions, and Kavanaugh's concurrence was the first time that a justice has cited it since. In referring to the case, Kavanaugh was making plain what Trump is planning to do in 2020.

Trump aims to use a stacked Supreme Court to make similar rulings for other states invalidating mail-in ballots, which he has claimed, without any factual basis, are subject to fraud. Hours after the ruling was published, Trump declared on Twitter: "Big problems and discrepancies with Mail In Ballots all over the USA. Must have final total on November 3rd." There is, in fact, no constitutional basis for Trump's insistence that the election must be decided by November 3. Election results are tallied by the states, which must choose their electors by the "safe harbor deadline" of December 8, after all votes are counted. Trump knows that the majority of mail-in ballots that would arrive near or after November 3 would be for Biden, and he is trying to create a pretext for declaring them invalid.

Trump, with the assistance of the courts, is seeking to create enough doubt about the outcome to allow Republican-controlled state legislatures in critical battleground states, including Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Wisconsin, to certify slates of pro-Trump electors regardless of the popular vote.

To buttress his court cases, Trump is seeking to incite far-right and fascistic violence prior to, during and after Election Day. He is focusing his final campaign rallies on key battleground states where Trump supporters have organized plots targeting sitting governors.

Less than three weeks after the exposure of a plot to kidnap and kill the governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, Trump held a campaign rally in the state capital in Lansing yesterday. Referring to the plot to kill her, Trump said that she had a "problem," before adding: "I mean, we'll see if it's a problem, right? People are entitled to say maybe it was a problem, maybe it wasn't."

He is also relying on support from within the police to assist fascistic organizations in intimidating voters on Election Day. In Michigan, many local sheriffs have declared that they will not enforce state orders banning firearms at polling locations.

On Tuesday, Michigan Court of Claims Judge Christopher Murray, appointed by former Republican Governor John Engler, issued a preliminary injunction effectively halting Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson's order banning the open carry of firearms. The decision was welcomed by Republican state legislators, who denounced the "overreach" of the Whitmer administration.

At his rally in Pennsylvania Monday, Trump railed against Democratic Governor Tom Wolf, threatening that "we are watching you." He boasted of support from police throughout the country: "All we can say is law enforcement is watching Nevada, it is watching Philadelphia and Pennsylvania because they had a lot of strange things... We're watching North Carolina, we're watching Michigan."

While Trump has a strategy to steal the election, the Democrats have no strategy to oppose it. Indeed, they are doing everything they can to cover up the threat to the most fundamental democratic right, the right to vote.

At his own campaign event on Tuesday, Democratic candidate Joe Biden made no mention of the election coup, the plot to kidnap and murder Whitmer and other governors, the confirmation of Barrett, the Supreme Court decision on Wisconsin or anything else related to

the threat to democratic rights in the election. At the final debate last week, the topic of Trump's plots and threats to remain in power was not even mentioned.

The Republicans were able to drive through the nomination of Barrett in only a couple of weeks, in the most fraught political circumstances, due entirely to the Democrats' decision from the very beginning to take no action to block the nomination, from shutting down the government to utilizing the many procedural rules in the Senate to prevent a final hearing before the election.

If the Democrats could not prevent the installation of Barrett, who can believe that they will be able to defend the outcome of an election that they win?

The Democrats, a party of Wall Street and the military, are terrified of anything that will spark mass unrest, which would threaten to develop into a movement against not just Trump, but the entire capitalist system.

In an interview with *Politico* over the weekend, Elissa Slotkin, a Democratic congresswoman and former CIA agent, made clear that behind the scenes top Democratic Party officials are actively discussing what will happen in the event that Trump refuses to leave office. Slotkin, *Politico* noted, "wonders that America could be heading toward a civil and constitutional crisis." Indeed, she "can think of little else these days."

Rather than alerting the public to the danger of a Trump coup, however, the Democrats' appeal is to the leaders of the military and intelligence agencies. To stay in power, Slotkin said, Trump "would need the support of his cabinet, particularly the attorney general, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the joint chiefs and the department head of Homeland Security." The Democrats, she said, have written letters to "these guys... to get them to think through their own red lines, what are they going to be willing to do and not do if, indeed, the president refuses to accept a loss."

All of this is taking place under conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, which is entering a new stage. The death toll, which has already surpassed 230,000, is rising. New cases are at record levels.

Trump's conspiracies are inseparable from the ruling class policy of "herd immunity," which will lead to a massive growth in coronavirus infections and deaths. In all of his speeches, Trump combines incitement of fascistic violence with ever more provocative dismissals of the danger of the pandemic and demands for an end to all restraints on its further spread.

Trump's program has no popular foundation. It is a program of death and social devastation. There is immense and growing social anger in the working class toward the entire policy of the ruling elites in response to the pandemic. Any attempt by Trump to stay in power under these conditions will lead to mass protests and social convulsions.

The Democrats' cowardice in response to Trump's conspiracies is entirely bound up with their own opposition to any policies to address the spreading pandemic or a social crisis that is unlike anything seen since the 1930s. Beyond talking about masks, the Democrats have nothing to propose, as they reject any measures that threaten the interests of the corporate and financial elite.

The Socialist Equality Party and our election campaign—Joseph Kishore for president and Norissa Santa Cruz for vice president—warn workers: To rely on the Democratic Party to defend democratic rights is nothing less than suicidal. They will defend nothing, not even their own election victory.

A genuine struggle against Trump's coup plotting can be developed only in opposition to the Democrats and the entire ruling class.

The fight against Trump's conspiracies must be connected to a socialist program in response to the expanding catastrophe, based on the interests of workers, not the ruling class. This includes the shutdown of non-essential production and schools as the pandemic spreads. All

workers affected, including the tens of millions unemployed, must receive full income, paid for through a massive reallocation of wealth.

Only on the basis of a socialist program can a serious movement be developed in defense of the most basic democratic right, the right to vote.

On Sunday, November 1, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, the Socialist Equality Party is holding an online election meeting, "[On the Eve of the Civil War Election: The Breakdown of American Democracy and the Fight for Socialism](#)," to examine Trump's conspiracy and how to fight it.

28 October 2020