

The January 6 Hearings: Michigan Spotlight

Background: The United States House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol (January 6 Select Committee) is holding oversight hearings in June 2022. It will present public testimony, evidence, and analysis relating to the January 6, 2021 attack, its run-up, and its aftermath. The attack and effort to undermine the will of the American voters did not happen in a vacuum. Fueled by [misinformation and lies about the 2020 election](#), many of the key actors involved and key actions taken that contributed to the attack originated from the states. After all, while elections are national events, they are run and led by the states.

The States United Democracy Center has created a series of state-by-state guides to the January 6 attack highlighting activities that sought to undermine our free, fair, and secure elections. The Michigan Spotlight includes events in the state leading up to the January 6 attack, participation by Michigan actors in relevant events and the attack itself, efforts in Michigan to discredit or reverse the outcome of the presidential election, and subsequent post-January 6 events.

I. EVENTS IN MICHIGAN LEADING UP TO JANUARY 6 ATTACK

Supporters of then-President Trump held rallies throughout the country attempting to discredit the 2020 presidential election process and challenging the official election results, including in Michigan, despite lacking factual basis for their allegations.

- On May 21, 2020, at a press conference in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Trump spread misinformation about mail-in ballots, saying, “who knows who’s signing it? ...[T]hey pirate these applications... You have all of the harvesting. ... they walk in...at the end of a race...and then all of a sudden, out of the blue come thousands of votes at the very end.”¹

- In the days after election day—November 3, 2020—dozens of pro-Trump protestors took to the streets outside Detroit’s convention center where ballots were being counted. The protestors chanted, “Stop the steal!” and carried signs that read “Make Elections Fair Again” and “We Love Trump.”² Eric R. Sabree, the Wayne County treasurer, said he had closed his office after law enforcement shared that they had received “credible” threat information.³ Poll workers were harassed and threatened by unruly challengers jeering and pounding their fists on windows while the counting went on.⁴ Some protestors “seemed to be taking cues from Trump and others who have complained about how the count is unfolding, accusing election officials of corruption and fraud as they continue to count hundreds of thousands of absentee ballots.”⁵ Trump also repeatedly made the demonstrably false claim that there were more votes cast in Detroit than people.⁶
- Monica Palmer, the Republican chairwoman of the Wayne County Board of Canvassers who initially voted against certifying her county’s election results, received a phone call from Trump after the canvassing board meeting on November 17, 2020.⁷ William Hartmann, the other Republican member of the four-person board who also initially voted not to certify the vote, also spoke with Trump.⁸
- On November 20, 2020, then-Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) and Majority Leader of the Michigan Senate Mike Shirkey (R-Clarkedale) went to the White House to meet with Trump at the president’s invitation.⁹ While the lawmakers were alleged to be discussing pandemic assistance, the meeting was subsequently followed by Trump posting unfounded claims on social media about election fraud in Michigan, which Chatfield then echoed.¹⁰
- On November 25, 2020, Trump ally Sidney Powell filed a since-dismissed lawsuit in Michigan, alleging that manipulated voting machines destroyed ballots and switched votes.¹¹ The federal court later sanctioned Powell and other lawyers for bringing the lawsuit, which the court found to be factually baseless and entirely lacking in evidence. The court’s order, exceeding 100 pages, concluded that the “lawsuit represent[ed] a historic and profound abuse of judicial process.”¹²
- Aaron Van Langevelde, a Republican member of the Michigan State Board of Canvassers, recounted that “some political leaders urged the Board to withhold certification [of electoral votes for then-candidate Joe Biden] based on unproven allegations of voter fraud, even though we had no legal authority to do so.”¹³ Van Langevelde refused, and Michigan certified its electoral votes for Biden on November 23, 2020.¹⁴

- Between Election Day and January 6, Michigan state Rep. Matt Maddock (R-Milford) consistently pushed lies about the 2020 election.¹⁵ In early December 2020, Maddock and other state lawmakers in Michigan “held a series of hearings seeking to validate unfounded claims of widespread voter fraud.”¹⁶ Trump attorneys Giuliani and Jenna Ellis testified at a hearing before the Michigan House Oversight Committee on December 2, 2020 and made baseless allegations of voter fraud and urged lawmakers to take legislative action to overturn the election results.¹⁷
- On December 7, 2020, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit to overturn the 2020 presidential election results in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.¹⁸ The U.S. Supreme Court rejected his case later that month, and the State Bar of Texas has now pursued a complaint against Paxton, accusing him of professional misconduct relating to this litigation.¹⁹
- On December 14, 2020, as detailed further in Section III, 10 Michigan Republicans convened to “cast votes” claiming to be an alternate slate of electors for Trump in Michigan, which did not reflect the decision of the state’s voters.²⁰
- Hours before Michigan’s Electoral College delegation certified the results for President Biden, state Rep. Gary Eisen (R-St. Clair) implied during a local radio interview that he and others may try to disrupt the proceedings and did not rule out violence.²¹
- Eleven Republican Michigan state legislators (along with Republican legislators from Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin) signed a letter to Vice President Mike Pence, dated January 5, 2021.²² The letter urged Pence to delay the counting of electoral votes for at least 10 days and allow the state legislatures time to certify or decertify the election.²³
- The same lies and conspiracy theories that fueled the January 6 attack contributed to threatening and violent messages aimed at election officials, including in Michigan. These threats were launched over email, voicemails, texts, letters, social media, and in-person events including gathering outside election officials’ homes. They often expressed false claims that the election was stolen.²⁴

II. MICHIGAN ACTORS INVOLVED IN JANUARY 6 ACTIVITIES

The Washington Post compiled a [timeline](#) documenting how January 6, 2021 progressed from Trump's "Save America" rally on the White House Ellipse to the breach and attack on the U.S. Capitol. Just Security and Protect Democracy compiled a [primer](#) that organizes and distills the multiprong campaign to overturn the 2020 election results.

- Matthew DePerno (current Republican candidate for Michigan attorney general): DePerno is a podcaster and attorney; DePerno met with a U.S. State Department official on January 6 to discuss last-minute maneuvers to try to overturn Trump's election loss.²⁵
- Jason Howland (candidate for Michigan state representative): Howland co-founded the American Patriot Council, an organization that claims that its mission is to "[r]estore and sustain a constitutional government in the United States of America,"²⁶ and which has organized armed protests at the Michigan state capitol and elsewhere.²⁷ Howland entered the Capitol on January 6.²⁸
- Audra Johnson (candidate for U.S. Congress): Johnson attended January 6 events in D.C. and was outside the Capitol.²⁹ She posted videos on social media, with statements such as "the storm is coming," and "[y]our fellow patriots are already in combat. We're already in war."³⁰
- Ryan Kelley (candidate for Michigan governor): Kelly co-founded the American Patriot Council, an organization that claims that its mission is to "[r]estore and sustain a constitutional government in the United States of America," and which has organized armed protests at the Michigan state capitol and elsewhere.³¹ Kelley "climbed on scaffolding, helped a man moving a police barricade and repeatedly waved fellow protesters toward" the Capitol attack on January 6.³² Kelly was arrested on charges related to the January 6 attack on June 9, 2022.³³
- Matt Maddock (Michigan state representative): Maddock is the spouse of state Republican Party chair Meshawn Maddock. He spoke at a pro-Trump rally in D.C. on January 5.³⁴
- Meshawn Maddock (current co-chair of Michigan Republican Party): Maddock is the spouse of state Rep. Matt Maddock (R-Milford). She organized buses from Michigan to the January 6 rally³⁵ that preceded the January 6 attack and she spoke at a pro-Trump rally in D.C. on January 5.³⁶
- Angela Rigas (candidate for Michigan state representative): After being exposed to tear gas outside the Capitol on January 6, Rigas said she "considered fleeing" but instead "ran right back into the tear gas" to try and "hold the line."³⁷

- Jon Rocha (candidate for U.S. Congress): Rocha watched Trump speak on January 6, and then walked to the Capitol.³⁸
- Indictments: At least 17 people with Michigan ties have been charged for their involvement in the January 6 attack and their cases are progressing through the courts:³⁹ Logan Barnhart, Timothy Boughner, Trevor Brown, Jeremiah Caplinger, Karl Dresch, Michael Foy, Daniel Herendeen, Justin Jersey, Ryan D. Kelley, Matthew Thomas Krol, James Mels, John Russel Parker, Anthony Puma, Robert Schornak, Jeremy Sorvisto, Steven Thurlow, and Anthony Robert Williams.

III. MICHIGAN'S FRAUDULENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS SLATE

- On December 14, 2020, groups of Republicans in Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, Michigan, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin signed documents made to look official that represented the signatories as the duly authorized or potential alternate presidential electors for Trump, rejecting the will of the voters in their states.⁴⁰ The actions of these fake electors are the possible subject of state and federal criminal probes.⁴¹
- Sixteen Michigan Republicans falsely claimed to be Michigan's 2020 electoral college delegation and sent their votes to Vice President Pence, the National Archivist, and the Michigan Secretary of State.⁴² They originally tried to enter the state capitol to meet but were blocked by law enforcement and subsequently convened elsewhere.⁴³
- The following individuals served as fake electors in Michigan:⁴⁴ Kathy Berden (National Republican Committee member from Michigan); Mayra Rodriguez (Wayne County Public Administrator); Meshawn Maddock (current co-chair of Michigan Republican Party); John Haggard (Charlevoix County Republican Chair); Kent Vanderwood (District 2 Republican Party Chair & Wyoming City Council Member); Marian Sheridan (Michigan GOP Grassroots Vice Chair); James Renner (2020 Republican Delegate to County Convention from Watertown Township); Amy Facchinello (Grand Blanc Board of Education Member); Rose Rook (Van Buren County Republican Executive Committee Member); Hank Choate (Michigan Republican Party 7th District Chair); Mari-Ann Henry (Greater Oakland Republican Club Member); Clifford Frost (Michigan Republican Party State Committee Member & Macomb County Republican Party Board Member); Stanley Grot (Shelby Township Clerk and Trustee & Michigan Republican Party 10th District Chair); Timothy King (Washtenaw County Republican Party Executive Committee Member & Michigan Republican Party 12th District Committee Member); Michele Lundgren (Wayne County Republican Party Precinct Delegate); Ken Thompson.

IV. POST-JANUARY 6 DEVELOPMENTS IN MICHIGAN

Michigan continues to be a hotbed of efforts to undermine nonpartisan election administration and spread disinformation about the 2020 presidential election results.

a. Prominent Anti-Democracy Visitors' Activities in the State

- Michael Flynn: Flynn is a retired United States Army lieutenant general and National Security Advisor for Trump.⁴⁵ Trump ally Flynn has hosted a “Reawaken America Tour” which stopped in Grand Rapids in August 2021.⁴⁶ The event featured Flynn, Mike Lindell, Lin Wood, Sidney Powell, “many of whom are currently under investigation for their roles in frivolous lawsuits surrounding the 2020 presidential election.”⁴⁷
- Mike Lindell: The MyPillow CEO joined Flynn at “Reawaken America Tour” stops in Michigan⁴⁸ and Ohio. The Ohio event in February 2022, which included attendees from Michigan, had a scheduled lineup that included Lindell, Flynn, Trump’s “Eric Trump, political consultant Roger Stone, broadcaster Alex Jones, former Fox News reporter Lara Logan and Dr. Stella Emmanuel.”⁴⁹
- Donald Trump: Trump held a rally at the Michigan Stars Sports Center in Washington Township in April 2022 where he stated, among other things, “We did win. We did win. And you know, if we didn’t, I’d be the first person to stand up and say we didn’t.”⁵⁰

b. Known January 6 Select Committee Subpoenas to Michigan Actors

The January 6 Select Committee has “issued more than 100 subpoenas to lawmakers, internet and communications companies, Trump White House officials and others” including rally and event organizers.⁵¹ Here are some examples of the Michigan actors that have received subpoenas from the committee.

- Kathy Berden (National Republican Committee member from Michigan): Served as a fake elector and has been subpoenaed by the January 6 Select Committee.⁵²
- Laura Cox (former Michigan Republican party chair): Cox has been subpoenaed by the January 6 Select Committee.⁵³
- Mayra Rodriguez (Wayne County public administrator): Rodriguez served as a fake elector and has been subpoenaed by the January 6 Select Committee.⁵⁴

c. Partisan Election Reviews and Decertification Efforts

- Some Republican legislators have demonstrated a willingness in the years since the 2020 election to support efforts grounded in the falsehood that President Biden’s 2020 electoral win in Michigan was illegitimate, and that voter fraud contributed to this electoral outcome. Some Michigan Republican state legislators have called for 2020 election-related “audits”⁵⁵ and groups denying the 2020 election results have pushed for a ballot measure to decertify those results.⁵⁶
- The Barry County sheriff Dar Leaf has launched what he purports to be a 2020 election fraud investigation, which has resulted in both Michigan State Police and the attorney general probing his efforts.⁵⁷ In June 2022, the sheriff filed a lawsuit against the attorney general, secretary of state, the Michigan State Police, individual troopers, and others alleging they are interfering with his efforts to investigate election fraud.⁵⁸

d. Legislation to Change Michigan’s Election Laws

- Legislators on both sides of the aisle in Michigan have introduced numerous election and voting rights bills during the legislative session on a variety of topics. Governor Whitmer has vetoed the election-related bills that have reached her desk this session.⁵⁹
- Since the 2020 presidential election and the January 6 attack, state legislatures across the country have considered a wide range of bills that would increase the risk of election subversion—that the purported outcome of the election does not reflect the choice of the voters. State by state, legislatures had moved to seize power from professional, non-partisan election administrators and to subject the running of elections to partisan influence and disruption. For more information about Michigan’s election subversion legislation, please see States United’s [2021](#) and [2022](#) report, written and published in collaboration with Protect Democracy and Law Forward.

e. Election Deniers Running for Michigan Statewide Office

Election Deniers are running for key constitutional offices in Michigan that have a role in election administration and enforcement.⁶⁰ The state's primary will be held August 2, 2022.

Election Denier Gubernatorial Candidates

- Tudor Dixon (R): [Election Denier](#)
- Ryan Kelley (R): [Election Denier](#)
- Ralph Rebandt (R): [Election Denier](#)
- Garrett Soldano (R): [Election Denier](#)
- Election Denier disqualified from the ballot because of fraud issues with qualifying signatures: Donna Brandenburg

Election Denier Attorney General Candidates

- Matthew DePerno (R): [Election Denier](#)

Election Denier Secretary of State Candidates

- Kristina Karamo (R): [Election Denier](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE STATES UNITED DEMOCRACY CENTER

[Countering Lies about the 2020 Presidential Election](#)

[A Democracy Crisis in the Making 2021](#) and [2022](#) reports

[Guide to Counting Electoral College Votes and The January 6, 2021 Meeting of Congress](#)

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This document was prepared by the States United Democracy Center.

The States United Democracy Center is a nonpartisan organization advancing free, fair, and secure elections. We focus on connecting state officials, law enforcement leaders, and pro-democracy partners across America with the tools and expertise they need to safeguard our democracy. For more information, visit www.statesuniteddemocracy.org.

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- ⁶ Timm, J. (2020, November 18). Fact check: Trump's bogus claim of more votes in Detroit than people. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/fact-check-trump-s-bogus-claim-more-votes-detroit-people-n1248121> See also Kessler, G. & Rizzo, S. (2020, November 5). President Trump's false claims of vote fraud: A chronology. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/11/05/president-trumps-false-claims-vote-fraud-chronology/>.
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- ²⁰ American Oversight Obtains Seven Phony Certificates of Pro-Trump Electors. (2021, March 2). *America Oversight*. <https://www.americanoversight.org/american-oversight-obtains-seven-phony-certificates-of-pro-trump-electors>; Sherman, A. (2022, January 28). What you need to know about the fake Trump electors. *PolitiFact*. <https://www.politifact.com/article/2022/jan/28/what-you-need-know-about-fake-trump-electors/>.
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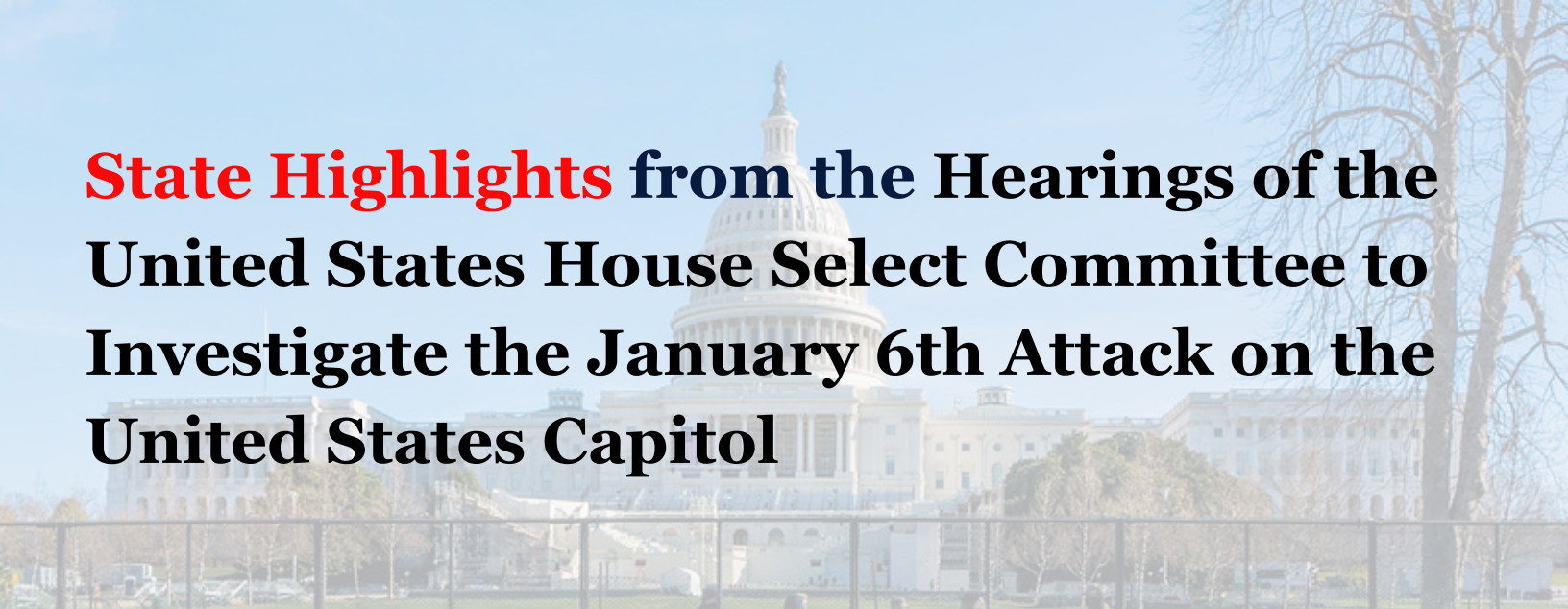
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State Highlights from the Hearings of the United States House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol

Background:

In June and July, the United States House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol (January 6 Select Committee) held eight public hearings that revealed new information regarding the coordinated efforts of then-President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

The January 6 Select Committee hearings focused on a variety of topics relevant to the January 6 attack on the Capitol: the conduct and actions of Trump and his outside advisors, campaign staff, and White House staff in the days leading up to and on January 6, 2021; the pressure campaign on federal, state, and local officials to challenge and change the official election results; and the roles of militias and white nationalist groups in the January 6 attack.

The January 6 Select Committee presented testimony from live witnesses, excerpts from recorded Committee depositions, interviews with the Committee's investigators and attorneys, and video clips from public events, as well as excerpts from documents, phone logs, official records, and text messages that the Committee obtained in the course of its investigation.

The States United Democracy Center [released](#) in June 2022 a series of five state-by-state guides to the January 6 attack highlighting activities that sought to undermine the free, fair, and secure 2020 presidential election. The following summaries highlight the evidence presented at the January 6 Select Committee hearings regarding the efforts to undermine the electoral outcomes in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

III. MICHIGAN

The States United Democracy Center's [Michigan January 6 Spotlight](#) outlines the events in the state leading up to the January 6 attack, participation by Michigan actors in related events and the attack itself, efforts in Michigan to discredit or reverse the outcome of the presidential election, and subsequent post-January 6 events. The following is a summary of the evidence presented at the January 6 Select Committee hearings related to Michigan.

- **Pressure campaign to overturn Michigan's presidential election results:**

- Trump mounted a pressure campaign directed at individual state legislators in Michigan to convince them to install “fake electors” who could replace the Biden electors.⁷⁷ As part of that pressure campaign, in mid-November 2020, Trump invited a delegation from Michigan, including Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clark Lake) and then-House Speaker Lee Chatfield (R-Levering), to a meeting at the White House.⁷⁸ The January 6 Select Committee presented deposition testimony from Shirkey, who recalled telling Trump at the White House meeting that “we were going to follow the law” despite Trump’s pressure tactics.⁷⁹
- The January 6 Select Committee presented deposition testimony from former Michigan Republican Party Chair Laura Cox explaining that she was approached by an attorney who “said he was working with [Trump’s] campaign,” and told her that a group of “Republican electors” in Michigan planned to meet in the State Capitol building and hide overnight to ensure that they could access the building.⁸⁰ She “told him in no uncertain terms that that was insane and inappropriate.”⁸¹

- **Protests and threats towards state officials:**

- The day after the Michigan legislators visited the White House, Trump posted on Facebook their contact information, including Shirkey’s personal phone number.⁸² The January 6 Select Committee presented portions of Shirkey’s deposition testimony documenting the aftermath: “All I remember is receiving over just shy of 4,000 text messages over a short period of time calling to take action. It was a loud noise, loud consistent cadence of, you know, we hear that—that the Trump folks are calling and asking for changes in the electors and you guys can do this. Well, you know they were—they were believing things that were untrue.”⁸³
- The January 6 Select Committee played deposition testimony from Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson recounting how armed protesters surrounded her family home at night in the weeks following the election, calling her a “threat to democracy.”⁸⁴

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78 June 21, 2022 Hearing: U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, 117th Cong. (2022) (Testimony of Mike Shirkey), <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/21/1105848096/jan-6-committee-hearing-transcript>.

79 See note 78.

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82 See note 78.

83 See note 78.

84 June 21, 2022 Hearing: U.S. House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, 117th Cong. (2022) (Testimony of Jocelyn Benson), <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/21/1105848096/jan-6-committee-hearing-transcript>. See also Newman, E. (2022, June 21). Jan. 6 committee hearings: Michigan officials targeted in Trump's "pressure campaign." *WDET*. <https://wdet.org/2022/06/21/jan-6-committee-hearings-michigan-officials-targeted-in-trumps-pressure-campaign/>.