

# The Delray Democrat

## The Real Danger of January 6<sup>1</sup>

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On January 6, 2021, a large armed mob attacked the US Capitol and the police officers entrusted with its security. The amount of violence, the serious weaponry (including chemicals), communications, planning, and of course the motivation all clearly point to this as an insurrection, perhaps even an attempted coup. Whatever you call it, this was a carefully planned attempt to interfere with the Constitutional functioning of Congress, to overthrow the 2020 Election, and to ignore the will of the people. What makes it worse is that members of the Trump administration and certain Congressional Republicans openly supported this vile attack on government and democracy.

This is not the most serious challenge stemming from the events of January 6. A major threat is the complacency of the American people. Large numbers of Americans fail to acknowledge how close Donald Trump and the insurrectionists came to overthrowing our government. They fail to understand that our democracy remains under attack, and they oppose the investigations and prosecutions of the most serious offenders as well as ongoing efforts to protect democracy, our institutions, and our elections. In fact, they simply do not realize or recognize the significance of the election laws passed in many states designed to suppress the vote of low income and communities of color.

What is extremely disturbing and highly unsettling is something designed to truly destabilize and threaten democracy and safe elections. Many of these extremists, including those who directly participated in the January 6 insurrection, are running for the House of Representatives and various state wide offices. If elected to Secretary of State positions or appointed as elections officials, they have plainly signaled their intent to reject otherwise bona fide results where their chosen candidates do not win. Sounds crazy, even conspiracy theory crazy, yet all one has to do is listen to their own words and take them at face value.

After 2020, Republican state and election officials stood fast and did their sworn duty to facilitate and uphold valid elections across the nation. They did so despite tremendous pressure from Trump forces, including death threats. That is what is at stake with these extremists winning and taking over those posts. Can you imagine Congress with an entire caucus full of Marjorie Taylor Greenes? One of the leading candidates for Arizona Secretary of State is one of the leaders of the Oath Keepers, an extremist militia, also fairly described as domestic terrorists, especially after their leading role in the January 6 insurrection and other violence. Voters should consider him per se disqualified as a candidate, but instead he has a good chance to win. In a normal, civil society he would not have any chance to win.

It is one thing to debate what should be done about preserving democratic institutions, voting rights, Electoral College procedures, and myriad other matters of governance. When it comes to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Delray Democrat*, February 2022, page 1.

the gross visual images of January 6, the brutal attack on and injuries to law enforcement, the destruction of Capitol property and government documents, and blatant threats to harm, even kill elected officials, there is no debate. Call it whatever you like, but at a minimum it was violent criminality. Yet, millions of Americans reject the plain and compelling, even uncontroverted, evidence.

This more than anything is the existential threat to our future. They want us to ignore what happened and just move on. How can there be any moving forward without creating an accurate factual record of what occurred and holding accountable those meriting such action? How do we strive to prevent future attacks on our democracy and elections, ones better planned and executed that could succeed if people refuse to acknowledge reality? If this were only the extremists, perhaps we could write them off, but we are talking about a larger subset of Americans encompassing far more than the political extreme. If we do not figure out how to address this challenge, all else is for nothing.

Although there is no magic panacea to accomplish this, there are some logical prerogatives. First, take extreme measures to prevent perceptions, and certainly any realities, of political agendas or goals in addressing this situation. The preservation of democracy and holding individuals accountable for criminality is not political. Second, these investigations must continue to be thorough, proper, and without suspicion to the greatest degree. They must be able to support prosecution and conviction or whatever the appropriate disposition is for the given case. The ensuing criminal trials must be done without hyperbole. Apply the provable facts to the existing law and seek reasonable outcomes. The American people need to see results and they must perceive these results as fair and just. We must get this done.