

# Deb McGrath: January 6th was dry run for insurrectionists

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Enemies Foreign and Domestic January 6th, 2022 Deb McGrath, Candidate for WI-03, Retired CIA Officer and Former Army Captain When I took my oath as an officer in the US Army, and then again as an officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, I pledged to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. While I knew that America faced hostile adversaries abroad – North Korea, Russia, China, and al Qaida – never did I imagine that a domestic threat would emerge that could threaten our nation. But in a world of rising dangers abroad, it is at home that we now face the greatest peril.

On January 6th, 2021, the world watched appalling scenes unfold in front of the White House and at the Capitol – the most important symbols of America's democracy. Not since 9/11 had the iconic symbols of our nation been so attacked. As the President incited a mob to violence with lies and then stood by as the seat of our democracy was assaulted and defiled, I thought back with alarm on the riots, coups, and tyranny I had seen abroad. I reflected that democracy, stability, and prosperity are not automatic, but are instead fragile and easily shattered by those who use lies, threats, and force to impose their will over others.

President Trump stood by as insurrectionists viciously attacked the law enforcement officers protecting the Capitol, his previous support for the thin blue line going suddenly silent. I knew that democracy must be defended not only abroad, but at home as well. I am running for Congress to defend our Constitutional rights, and to support our families and the economy in Wisconsin. That is what makes our country strong.

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America is at an inflection point. At the same time many Americans yearn for a time when compromise and bipartisanship were the norm, others speak of civil war, succession, and the legitimacy of political violence. We must resolutely and decisively oppose such notions. This starts with principled leadership that respects and represents our Constitution and the electorate. We must guarantee the voices of marginalized communities, people of color, the impoverished, and the elderly are heard and their votes counted. Democracy thrives on debate, argument, and civil discourse.

The work of the bipartisan January 6th committee is even more important to defending America than was the seminal 9/11 commission to document the facts, illuminate the failures, and suggest a path forward. In the words of Elvis Presley, "Truth is like the sun. You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't goin' away."

On January 6th, President Trump violated the most sacred and important tradition of our democracy – the peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another. His actions played into the hands of foreign enemies who know that they can never defeat America on the battlefield, but instead seek to set our citizens against each other. The strength of our nation depends on engaged citizenship; we must protect our revered Constitution.

I am battle-tested, but this is the most important fight of my life. Our democracy, our America, is under assault from without and within. I refuse to give into those who seek to divide, knowing that when Americans work together, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. The antidote to the violence of January 6th is greater access and participation in the process by voters from all parties, all communities, all constituencies. Only then can faith in the process be restored.

*– McGrath is a Democratic candidate for Wisconsin's 3rd CD and a retired CIA officer and former Army captain.*