

Wisconsin Democracy Campaign: Wisconsin's January 6 collaborators

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MADISON—Here in Wisconsin, we've had our own collaborators in the Jan. 6 coup attempt by far right Trumpites.

I'm not even referring to the six Wisconsinites who were charged with crimes in the U.S. Capitol that day.

I'm referring, instead, to Republican activists and elected officials who schemed to subvert the Electoral College vote or who have continued to perpetuate the Big Lie and thereby sabotage the people's faith in our elections to this day.

First, in December of 2020, a group of 10 Republicans took it upon themselves to "certify" that Trump had won the election here and they pretended to be Wisconsin's electors to the Electoral College. Here is the list of these false and fraudulent "electors": Carol Brunner, Mary Buestrin, Darryl Carson, Bill Feehan, Scott Grabins, Andrew Hitt, Kathy Kiernen, Kelly Ruh, Robert Spindell, and Pam Travis. (One of these, Robert Spindell, is actually on the Wisconsin Elections Commission, which received a legal complaint last February from Law Forward to investigate all of these false electors, including Spindell.)

Then on Jan. 5, 2021, of all days, 15 Republican state legislators from Wisconsin (along with Republican legislators from Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania) signed a [letter](#) to Vice President Pence urging him to delay the counting of electoral votes for at least 10 days and allow the legislatures in these state time to decertify the electors who were sent to the Electoral College and to certify their own slates. (This was part of the plot that the Eastman memo had outlined for Trump.)

The Wisconsin legislators who signed this letter were:

Sen. [André Jacque](#) (R-DePere) and Reps. [Janel Brandtjen](#) (R-Menomonee Falls), [Rick Gundrum](#) (R-Slinger), [Robert Brooks](#) (R-Saukville), [Cody Horlacher](#) (R-Mukwonago), [Dan Knodl](#) (R-Germantown), [Gae Magnafici](#) (R-Dresser), [Dave Murphy](#) (R-Greenville), [Jeff Mursau](#) (R-Crivitz), [Joe Sanfelippo](#) (R-West Berlin), [Michael Schraa](#) (R-Oshkosh), [Tim Ramthun](#) (R-Campbellsport), [Shae Sortwell](#) (R-Two Rivers), [Jeremy Thiesfeldt](#) (R-Fond du Lac) and [Chuck Wichgers](#) (R-Muskego). (Note that Rep. Brandtjen is the chair of the Assembly Committee on Elections, where [she has been holding one biased hearing](#) after another to air her conspiracy theories.)

None of these elected officials, nor any of the false electors, has had to account for their disgraceful role in this sinister plot.

Since Jan. 6, 2021, we've continued to see denialism about Biden's legitimacy (Rep. Ramthun [introduced a resolution](#) in November to retroactively decertify Wisconsin's electors to the Electoral College), denialism about the subversion on Jan. 6 (see [Ron Johnson](#)), the introduction of anti-voter bills, and an all-out assault on the bipartisan Wisconsin Elections Commission.

Here are the goals of these anti-American efforts.

First, to keep feeding rancid red meat to the enraged Trumpite base so they will turn out in huge numbers in 2022 and 2024.

Second, to enact laws that will make it harder for people to vote, especially people who lean Democratic.

And third, to sully the reputation of the Wisconsin Elections Commission so badly that partisan Republican officials in the Legislature can destroy it and hand over the administration – and more dangerous still, the certification – of our elections to the Legislature itself or to a particular partisan official the Legislature appoints. In this way, Republican partisans could overturn the will of the people and decide, by fiat, who won the election, regardless of the actual vote count.

That's what the [Gableman fishing expedition](#) is all about.

That's what the wild accusations from the sheriff of Racine County, [Christopher Schmaling](#) (who was the featured speaker at a Women for Trump rally during the 2020 campaign here), are all about. Schmaling got into the act by saying that five

of the six commissioners of the Wisconsin Elections Commission should be prosecuted for sending absentee ballots to people in nursing homes when Special Voting Deputies weren't able to get in there.

This constant drumbeat of propaganda, amplified on rightwing talk radio, has infected much of the Republican Party, with 64% of Republicans in Wisconsin doubting the validity of last November's election, according to a Marquette Law School poll late last year.

Many Republican officials, with the notable exception of Sen. [Kathy Bernier](#), have been afraid to speak up and tell the truth, for fear that their base – or their party leaders – will punish them for it.

So they've created a monster here, and the monster is out of control, and it's threatening to gobble up the Wisconsin Elections Commission and trample all over our precious ideal of fair elections in Wisconsin.

This is the legacy of Jan. 6 in Wisconsin. And it's not pretty.