

WisDems: Supporters of GOP Gubernatorial campaigns secretly met at capitol in plot to overturn 2020 election

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MADISON, Wis. – Top Republicans associated with Rebecca Kleefisch and Kevin Nicholson's campaigns met in secret at the state Capitol as part of their plot to overturn the 2020 election and hired armed security to protect themselves as they carried out their plan.

The group, who posed as fake electors in an attempt to overthrow the will of the people, is tied very closely to Kleefisch and Nicholson. Bill Feehan, who detailed this plot on a podcast, [serves on an advisory board](#) for Kleefisch's campaign; Darryl Carlson [serves as the executive director](#) of Kevin Nicholson's political group; former GOP state party chair Andrew Hitt has donated thousands to Kleefisch's campaign for governor and was previously [announced](#) as the chair of Adam Jarchow's campaign for attorney general; and Kelly Ruh, a Republican activist, served as a key advisor of Kleefisch as a member of the [leadership board of the 1848 Project](#). Hitt and Ruh [have been subpoenaed by Congress](#) for their role in posing as fake electors.

Wisconsin Republicans will do anything to win an election, even if it means undermining the Constitution and plotting a coup. It goes all the way to the top — even Assembly Speaker Robin Vos [asked the state's Legislative Reference Bureau if it was possible to send in different presidential electors](#).

A Republican governorship would be extremely dangerous to our democracy. Kleefisch has supported attempts to make it more difficult for eligible voters to

participate in elections and suggested that she would be open to allowing the legislature to [overturn the results of a statewide election](#).

Read more about the Republicans' coup attempt below.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Wisconsin Republicans who posed as electors met in a 'secret location,' brought armed security with them, one member says](#)

Wisconsin Republicans who posed as presidential electors in 2020 met secretly for an hour before filling out official-looking paperwork at the state Capitol and were accompanied by armed security, according to one of the participants.

The account — given a year ago in a podcast by would-be elector Bill Feehan — provides one of the most detailed descriptions yet of a meeting that is now being scrutinized by federal prosecutors and the U.S. House committee investigating last year's riot at the U.S. Capitol.

"I left my home a little after 8 o'clock and drove to a secret meeting place in Madison and met all the other electors there. There was security — armed security — to protect us. And other officials from the Republican Party of Wisconsin were there," Feehan said in a podcast that was posted online a month after the meeting.

"It's all super secret for security reasons, so we met in a secret location. We waited for almost an hour before they took us to the state Capitol."

Republicans viewed secrecy for the meeting in Wisconsin and other states as important, according to legal memos for Donald Trump's campaign that were made public Wednesday by the New York Times.

"It might be preferable for them to meet in private, if possible, to thwart the ability of protesters to disrupt the event," attorney Kenneth Chesebro wrote in a Dec. 9, 2020 memo.

The memo, like one written three weeks earlier, was directed to James Troupis, the former Dane County judge who oversaw Trump's legal operation in Wisconsin as he pursued recounts and legal challenges to Joe Biden's victory in the state.

The memos made the case for Republicans to meet as electors in states Trump had lost in hopes that courts or Congress would ultimately give Trump a second term.

Republicans in seven states held such meetings.

[...]

In response to a lawsuit brought by Troupis, the Wisconsin state Supreme Court ruled against Trump an hour before the Electoral College met. Wisconsin's Republicans met as electors even though the court had found the state's 10 electoral votes belonged to Biden.

The decision was 4-3, with Republican-backed Justice Brian Hagedorn joining the court's three liberals.

"The mood was one of excitement up until we heard the result of the Wisconsin state Supreme Court's ruling," Feehan said on his podcast, "Fact Check with Bill Feehan."

[...]

Anna Kelly, a spokeswoman for the state Republican Party, downplayed the secrecy surrounding the event. She noted that three days before the meeting Troupis included a footnote in a filing to the state Supreme Court that said the Republicans planned to gather as electors.

"If one of the electors discusses the process in a podcast, by definition, it's not all that secretive," Kelly said by email.

She said the "secret location" Feehan mentioned was the state Republican Party's headquarters in Madison. They met there beforehand so they could travel to the Capitol together, Kelly said. Troupis did not participate in their meeting, she said.

Feehan and his colleagues now find themselves under a microscope.

In addition to the U.S. Department of Justice review, the state Elections Commission is expected to meet in March to consider a complaint on the issue. The House committee last week subpoenaed two Wisconsin Republicans over the meeting, along with a dozen Republicans from the six other states that hosted similar events.

[...]

The day the Republicans gathered, the Wisconsin Capitol was closed to the public because of the coronavirus pandemic. Republicans said at the time they weren't sure if they could get in the building and planned to hold their meeting on the Capitol grounds if they couldn't get inside.

Feehan did not say how the Republicans got in the Capitol or which room they used. He did not return a phone call on Thursday.

"We had to arrange to be let into the state Capitol, where we had a meeting room reserved, and that's where we met to cast our ballots in the Electoral College," Feehan said on the podcast.

Rooms were reserved in the Capitol that day on behalf of the state Republican Party by aides to Scott Fitzgerald, who at the time was the majority leader of the state Senate and now is a member of Congress. It's unclear if the Republicans used one of those rooms or gathered elsewhere in the Capitol.

Feehan did not say in his podcast why the Republicans had armed security. The Capitol Police patrol the Capitol and its grounds.

[...]

After the 2020 election, Feehan teamed up with one-time Trump attorney Sidney Powell to file a lawsuit based on a far-fetched theory that voting machines were hacked. A federal judge threw out the suit days before Feehan and the others claimed to be electors.

Feehan is the chairman of the La Crosse County Republican Party and serves on an advisory board for the campaign of former Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, who is running for governor.

Another one of the Republicans who claimed to be an elector, Darryl Carlson, serves as the director of No Better Friend Corp., a political group established by Kleefisch's primary opponent, Kevin Nicholson.

Last month two others in the group were subpoenaed by the House committee exploring the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. They are Andrew Hitt, an attorney who was chairman of the state party at the time of the meeting, and Kelly Ruh, a De Pere city council member and chairwoman of the 8th Congressional District Republican Party.

[...]

Ruh served on an advisory board for the 1848 Project, a political group launched by Kleefisch before she announced her bid for governor. Mary Buestrin, another one of the Republican would-be electors, also served on that board.

[...]