

Statement by Former National Security Officials

We are former senior national security officials who served in Republican administrations under Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and/or Donald Trump or as Republican Members of Congress. We believe that President Trump's refusal to concede the election and allow for an orderly transition constitutes a serious threat to America's democratic process and to our national security. We therefore call on Republican leaders – especially those in Congress – to publicly demand that President Trump cease his anti-democratic assault on the integrity of the presidential election.

It has been clear for over two weeks that Joe Biden won the 2020 Presidential election, garnering 306 electoral votes, far more than the 270 electoral votes required to be elected.

Despite this clear outcome, President Trump has refused to accept the results and begin the transition process. While the President is legally entitled to request recounts and file good-faith legal challenges, he has presented no evidence of widespread fraud or any other significant irregularities. Nearly every case filed by the President's team across multiple states has been summarily dismissed.

President Trump's continued efforts to cast doubt on the validity of the election and to interfere in state electoral processes undermine our democracy and risk long-term damage to our institutions. Although some Republican leaders have supported President Trump's right to challenge aspects of the voting in various states, for the good of the country, they should now strongly oppose his dangerous and extra-legal efforts to intimidate state election officials and distort the Electoral College process.

President Trump's refusal to permit the presidential transition also poses significant risks to our national security, at a time when the U.S. confronts a global pandemic and faces serious threats from global adversaries, terrorist groups, and other forces. The delay in allowing transition teams to meet and confer with officials on the Coronavirus Task Force and at the National Security Council, the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security, and the other departments and agencies critical to U.S. national security means that the incoming Biden Administration will be less prepared to defend America's security when it assumes power in 59 days.

These concerns are not just hypothetical: the 9/11 Commission concluded that the shortened transition to the George W. Bush Administration during the election dispute in 2000-2001 “hampered the new administration in identifying, recruiting, clearing, and obtaining Senate confirmation of key appointees” who were responsible for addressing the gathering threat of al Qaida terrorists in the months leading up to the 9/11 attacks. To ensure national security readiness, the Commission recommended that a high priority be placed on “minimizing as much as possible the disruption to national security policymaking during the change of administrations.”

The election is over, the outcome certain. Over the past days, a number of Republican leaders have called on President Trump to respect the will of the American people. It is now time for the rest of the Republican leadership to put politics aside and insist that President Trump cease his dilatory and anti-democratic efforts to undermine the result of the election and begin a smooth and orderly transition of power to President-elect Biden. By encouraging President Trump's delaying tactics or remaining silent, Republican leaders put American democracy and national security at risk.

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