

Trump and his GOP enablers are slandering American democracy

Opinion by Editorial Board – The Washington Post
Dec. 11, 2020 at 12:37 a.m. GMT+1

UNDETERRED BY one defeat in court after another, President Trump is ratcheting up his effort to overturn last month's election results. He is promoting a ludicrous lawsuit filed by Republican state attorneys general. He and his allies are pressing members of Congress to reject electoral votes from swing states he lost, using a rare parliamentary maneuver that should be reserved for serious allegations of electoral malfeasance. These efforts will fail as his lawsuits have failed, but not before further entrenching Mr. Trump's election lies and doing more damage to Americans' faith in their democracy.

Mr. Trump's legal crusade was never credible, raising the question of whether he really thought he could win or whether he was challenging the results simply to delegitimize President-elect Joe Biden and keep his grip on Republicans. Latching on to *Texas v. Pennsylvania*, the last-ditch lawsuit from Republican state attorneys general, the Trump team admitted that it cannot show fraud but argued that the Supreme Court should block the electoral college from finalizing its votes anyway. Judges will reject this wild argument, too.

But instead of deescalating, as many of his enablers in Congress predicted he would have by now, Mr. Trump is abusing yet another legitimate channel to achieve the illegitimate goal of upending the election. The president cannot halt the formal casting of electoral college votes on Dec. 14. So, The Post reported Thursday, he and his allies are increasingly focused on persuading Republicans to object to the results when Congress meets to count the electoral college votes on Jan. 6.

If at least one member from each chamber objects to a state's electoral votes, the House and the Senate must separately debate whether to accept them. At least one House Republican already has signaled he will object; the search is on for an unprincipled Republican senator to follow suit. The maneuver would force every Republican to take a stand — for democracy or for Mr. Trump. The Democratic House will not side with Mr. Trump, nor will at least several GOP senators. So the point is the spectacle: making it appear as though there is an authentic controversy where there is none; making it a Republican article of faith that Mr. Biden is illegitimate.

Some GOP members of Congress are actively assisting this effort. An astonishing 106 House Republicans signed an amicus brief in *Texas v. Pennsylvania*, siding with the state attorneys general who seek to disenfranchise millions of swing-state voters. The list includes some who in a different time were seen as relative moderates, such as Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-N.Y.), one of the many Republicans who has lost her credibility defending Mr. Trump. On the Senate side, Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) abused his chairmanship of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to conduct an election-year fishing expedition into Mr. Biden's son Hunter. Now Mr. Johnson is calling a Dec. 16 hearing into election "irregularities."

Let's take a moment to recall: There was no fraud in this election. It was not rigged. The president and his craven enablers have marshaled no evidence to support their conspiracy theory. So it comes down to this: These Republicans are slandering American democracy. What do they see when they look in the mirror?