

Major Progressive Organizations Ask Media to Refuse Interviews with Elected Officials who Dispute 2020 Presidential Election Results

January 29, 2021

Dear Members of the Media,

The violent insurrection in the U.S. Capitol on January 6th was an attack on our democracy with a singular goal of overturning the free and fair election of President Joe Biden. While elected officials of all political stripes have denounced the violence, this mob did not manifest out of thin air. It was fueled by blatant lies claiming that the 2020 presidential election was illegitimate. These lies were summarily dismissed by our judicial system, in courts at all levels and by Trump-appointed judges. Former Attorney General William Barr even stated on December 1 that the Justice Department had “not seen fraud on a scale that could have affected a different outcome in the election.”

Nevertheless, dozens of Republican elected officials continued to propagate the lie that the election was rife with fraud and stolen. Those who promoted this lie bear direct responsibility for the violent attack on our democracy. Worse, even after the insurrection and death of five Americans, 147 Republicans in Congress voted to overturn the elections in the state of Arizona and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, attempting to disenfranchise more than 10 million Americans. These Members of Congress should all resign for fomenting an attack against our democracy.

The overthrow of American democracy cannot be treated as just another political debate, and there is no “both sides” to an insurrectionist movement that law enforcement officials and the military are bracing for as a prolonged threat--to our security and our democracy.

The news media is an integral component of rebuilding a functioning democracy, and it must begin with affirming the truth. We cannot brush past the lies of the past few months and the consequences that arose from them.

Therefore, we write to encourage you to set a standard for your interviews of elected officials moving forward: they should publicly concede that the 2020 presidential election was free and fair, and that claims to the contrary are false.

In short, you should not give a platform to individuals to discuss other policy issues if they won't adhere to a central fact core to our democracy.

For example, Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma, who originally planned to vote to overturn state election results, has shown genuine remorse in his role propagating lies, whereas House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senator Josh Hawley, and Senator Ted Cruz--along with hundreds of other congressional Republicans--have not, and their elevation in the news media will only serve to legitimize their dangerous, deceptive positions. This denial of democracy is also particularly pernicious toward voters of color, as Senator Lankford noted in his apology.

Every American is entitled to freedom of speech, but they are not entitled to appear on prestigious television programs or news outlets to spread demonstrable falsehoods that have already incited a murderous insurrection, and remain at the heart of an ongoing national security threat.

This is not about freedom of speech or censorship: these elected officials already have megaphones that are orders of magnitudes larger than most Americans will ever have. It is about upholding the same boundaries that the news media have always upheld: that those inciting violence with malicious propaganda should not be given a platform to spread it. It is also about restoring a legitimate democratic debate that can allow this country to move forward and heal, even as healthy disagreement on many issues remains.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress Action Fund

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Bend the Arc Jewish Action

Bill Maddocks Consultant LLC

Brave New Films

Broward for Progress

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Center for Media and Democracy

Common Cause

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March for Our Lives

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Missouri Voter Protection Coalition

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