

EXPLAINER

How 'fake electors' scheme worked

Trump's 2020 campaign targeted 7 states he lost

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USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – A grand jury has charged 11 Arizona Republicans and seven former aides to former President Donald Trump with crimes including forgery for falsely certifying he won the state in 2020.

It is the latest in a series of state and federal criminal indictments stemming from the Trump campaign's "fake elector" scheme to overturn the 2020 election.

Trump and his allies allegedly devised a plan to recruit fake electors to replace legitimate presidential electors in key battleground states and reverse Trump's loss, according to state indictments in Georgia, Michigan and Arizona and a federal indictment in Washington, D.C. Here's a closer look at the alleged plot. First, a civics review:

Presidential elections are determined by the Electoral College. Technically, when voters walk into the booth or lick the mail-in ballot envelope, they are actually choosing electors for their preferred presidential candidate.

The month after a presidential election, all electors meet in their individual states to collect the results of the presidential election and to send their votes to Congress for certification. Each candidate has a slate of electors who have pledged to vote for that candidate.

The electors for the candidate who wins the plurality of votes in a state cast Electoral College votes on behalf of that candidate. The exceptions are Maine and Nebraska. There, the two electors corresponding to the state's two Senate seats vote for the state's overall winner. The rest of the electors correspond to

congressional districts and vote for the winner of the vote in each district.

The Constitution and federal laws provide general requirements for elector selection. Electors cannot be members of Congress, hold high-level federal positions or have engaged in an insurrection or rebellion against the U.S.

The alleged scheme

After the Trump campaign's efforts to overturn his losses in key swing states were defeated in court, his campaign hatched a plot to draft alternative slates of electors in seven states that President Joe Biden carried: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Trump's electors met on Dec. 17 to cast fraudulent votes for Trump and sign certificates falsely claiming they were legitimate electors, which they sent to the National Archives and Congress. The watchdog group American Oversight has published some of the fake certificates. Trump and his allies pressured then-Vice President Mike Pence to use the fake elector certificates to refuse to certify Biden's Electoral College victory during the joint session of Congress on Jan. 6, 2021, on the grounds that there were competing slates of electors and doubt as to which should be counted.

"We would just be sending in 'fake' electoral votes to Pence so that 'someone' in Congress can make an objection when they start counting votes, and start arguing that the 'fake' votes should be counted," Jack Wilenchik, an Arizona-based pro-Trump lawyer, wrote in an email to Trump adviser Boris Epshteyn.



Donald Trump's campaign sought to draft alternative slates of electors in seven states that he lost: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

ROSS D. FRANKLIN/POOL VIA REUTERS FILE

Electors who have been indicted for their role in this scheme include former Arizona Republican Chair Kelli Ward and Arizona Republican state Sens. Jake Hoffman and Anthony Kern as well as Georgia Republican Party Chair David Shafer and Michigan GOP national committeewoman Kathleen Berden.

The 1960 precedent

The Trump campaign claimed a 1960 precedent for their alternative elector slates. In that year, the results of the vote count in Hawaii remained in dispute as the electors' meeting date drew near. A recount was underway, but it did not appear as though it would be completed by the time the Electoral College was expected to convene, on Dec. 19, 1960. Republican Vice President Richard Nixon claimed he was leading and the governor formally certified a slate of electors declaring him the victor. But Sen. John F. Kennedy's campaign drafted an alternate slate of electors. Kennedy electors ended up being certified after Kennedy won a recount.

However, historians have noted several differences with the Trump 2020

campaign. Hawaii's competing elector slates were chosen in public, while Trump's were in secret. And there was an ongoing recount in Hawaii in 1960, whereas all seven states Trump tried to overturn had unequivocally determined Biden won. The federal indictment charges Trump with four felony counts: conspiracy to defraud the U.S., conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding on Jan. 6, conspiracy against rights, and obstruction of and attempt to obstruct an official proceeding.

The Georgia indictment charged Trump and 18 of his allies with violating the state's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act for a pressure campaign on state election workers, a scheme to use so-called fake electors and more. Four defendants have pleaded guilty, including Trump lawyers Kenneth Chesebro, Jenna Ellis and Sydney Powell.

Trump and his allies such as former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani also face other charges in the Georgia indictment.

Contributing: John Fritze, USA TODAY

Mom's journey takes her across US to honor son

JD Mullane
Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

LEVITTOWN, Pa. – Even now it's hard to believe Brock Curtis is gone. Photos show a happy life of travel and family and friends. Playing baseball, skydiving, visiting five continents. But he's gone.

He took his own life at 24 on Jan. 12, 2021. His mother, Debbie Curtis, wants you to know about him.

"A great kid," she said. "Tall, 6' 3", so handsome. Very athletic. Very empathetic. He traveled the world. He studied abroad in Korea, in Peru. He felt comfortable with new places and new people and new things. Brock was very outdoorsy. A stop and smell-the-roses kind of guy."

But like so many people, Brock had a mental illness. Three years before his death, he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

"We think he had a psychotic break and didn't realize what he was doing. There was no indication that day, or any day before that," his mother said.

More than 50,000 Americans completed suicide last year, which is the most of any year on record, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Brock had sought help. He had checked into a psychiatric facility where he spent 10 days. It wasn't enough. He was embarrassed by his condition.

Grieving, she decided to raise awareness. There's now an endowment in



Debbie Curtis cruises up to her brother's house in Falls Township, Pennsylvania after 3,600 mile bike ride across America. JD MULLANE/BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

Brock's name from Niagara University and a website for the Curtis-Tallman Family Foundation, online at 4Team-Brock.com.

But that wasn't enough. So she came up with a coast-to-coast bike ride. "I walked into a bike shop and I asked

the guy, 'Can you recommend a bike to go across the U.S.? And the guy looked me up and down, and I could see the cartoon thought bubble coming out of his head: 'Sad old lady. No chance,' " she said. "But moms have a level of determination to do something when it comes

to their children. And I knew this would be an attention-getter."

If you or a loved one is struggling, individuals can call, text, or chat by dialing 988 and will be directly connected to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Obituaries

TODAY'S DEATH NOTICES

Name	Age	Town, State	Passed	Arrangements	Service Time	Service Location	Interment
Carlisle, Elizabeth Duvall	77	Louisville, KY	Apr 26	Fern Creek Funeral Home	--	-	-
*Jones, Steve	68	Bardstown, KY	Apr 24	Newcomer Cremations, Funerals & Receptions, Southwest Louisville Chapel	May 03 1:00pm	Newcomer Funeral Home (10304 Dixie Hwy)	Cave Hill

*Additional information in display obituaries
Obituaries appear in print and online at courier-journal.com/obituaries

Steve Jones

BARDSTOWN - The love of my life, Steve Jones, 68, died Wednesday, April 24, 2024. He is survived by Laura, Steven and Gracie, his siblings and nieces and nephews.

Perhaps they are not stars in the sky, but rather openings where our loved ones shine down to let us know they are happy.

-Inuit saying

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In Memoriam