

Jan. 6 panel claims Trump engaged in 'criminal conspiracy'

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the U.S. Capitol insurrection said Wednesday night that its evidence shows former President Donald Trump and his associates engaged in a "criminal conspiracy" to prevent Congress from certifying the results of the presidential election, spread false information about the outcome and pressured state officials to overturn it.

The committee made the claims in a filing in response to a lawsuit by Trump adviser John Eastman. Eastman, a lawyer who was consulting with Trump as he attempted to overturn the election, is trying to withhold documents from the committee as it investigates the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection. The committee argued there is a legal exception to attorney-client privilege allowing the disclosure of communications regarding ongoing or future crimes.

"The Select Committee also has a good-faith basis for concluding that the President and members of his Campaign engaged in a

criminal conspiracy to defraud the United States," the committee wrote in a filing submitted in U.S. District Court in the Central District of California.

The 221-page filing marks the committee's most formal effort to link the former president to a federal crime, though the actual import of the filing is not clear since lawmakers do not have the power to bring charges on their own and can only make a referral to the Justice Department. The department has been investigating last year's riot, but has not given any indication that it is considering seeking charges against Trump.

"The evidence supports an inference that President Trump and members of his campaign knew he had not won enough legitimate state electoral votes to be declared the winner of the 2020 Presidential election during the January 6 Joint Session of Congress, but the President nevertheless sought to use the Vice President to manipulate the results in his favor," the filing states.

The brief filed Wednesday was in an effort by the committee to refute attorney-client privilege claims made by Eastman in order to withhold records from congressional investigators.

"The Select Committee is not conducting a criminal investigation," Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, the committee's Democratic chairman, said in a statement. "But, as the judge noted at a previous hearing, Dr. Eastman's privilege claims raise the question whether the crime-fraud exception to the attorney-client privilege applies in this situation."

A request for comment from Eastman's lawyer was not immediately returned.

The filing also details excerpts from the committee's interviews with several top Trump aides and members of former Vice President Mike Pence's team, including chief of staff Marc Short and chief counsel Greg Jacob.

The committee said it found evidence that Trump sought to obstruct an official proceeding — in this case, the certification of the elec-

tion results — by trying to strongarm Pence to delay the proceedings so there would be additional time to "manipulate" the results.

In a Jan. 6, 2021, email exchange between Eastman and Jacob, Eastman pushes for Pence to intervene in his ceremonial role of overseeing the certification of the electoral votes.

Jacob replies: "I respect your heart here. I share your concerns about what Democrats will do once in power. I want election integrity fixed. But I have run down every legal trial placed before me to its conclusion, and I respectfully conclude that as a legal framework, it is a results-oriented po-

sition that you would never support if attempted by the opposition, and essentially entirely made up."

He added, "And thanks to your bulls—, we are now under siege."

In other transcripts released as part of the filing, former senior Justice Department official Richard Donoghue described trying to convince Trump that claims of election fraud

were pure fiction. "I told the President myself that several times, in several conversations, that these allegations about ballots being smuggled in a suitcase and run through the machines several times, it was not true, that we had looked at it, we looked at the video, we interviewed the witnesses, and it was not true."

At one point, Donoghue said, he had to reassure Trump that the Justice Department had investigated a report that someone had transported a tractor-trailer full of ballots from New York to Pennsylvania. The department found no evidence to support the allegations, Donoghue said.

The transcripts shed colorful detail on a contentious Jan. 3, 2021, meeting at which Trump contemplated replacing his acting attorney general, Jeffrey Rosen, with an assistant who promised to get to the bottom of the president's bogus claims of election fraud.

That assistant, Jeffrey Clark, had been the department's top environmental enforcement lawyer for a pe-

riod, a fact that led to some derision from colleagues at the meeting when it was pointed out that Clark had not been a criminal prosecutor.

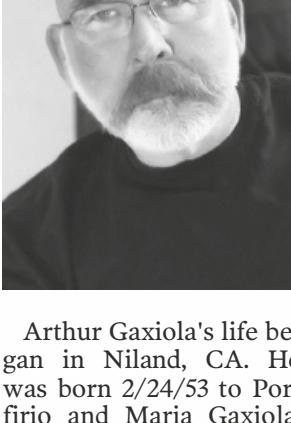
"And he kind of retorted by saying, 'Well, I've done a lot of very complicated appeals and civil litigation, environmental litigation, and things like that,'" Donoghue said. "And I said, 'That's right. You're an environmental lawyer. How about you go back to your office, and we'll call you when there's an oil spill.'"

The filing was the most comprehensive preview yet of the findings of the committee, which is investigating the violent insurrection of Trump's supporters in an effort to ensure that nothing like it happens again. While the panel can't pursue criminal charges, members say that they want the public to have a thorough account of the attack, in which hundreds of people brutally beat police, pushed through windows and doors and interrupted the certification of President Joe Biden's win.

OBITUARIES

ARTHUR GAXIOLA

Feb. 24, 1953 – Jan. 8, 2022



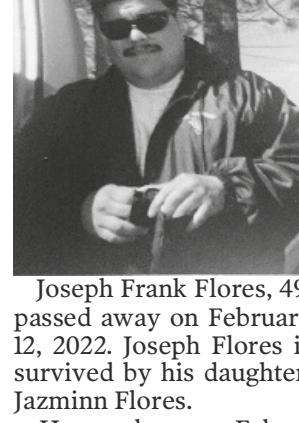
Arthur Gaxiola's life began in Niland, CA. He was born 2/24/53 to Porfirio and Maria Gaxiola. He was a Calipatria High School graduate. In 1972, he married Brenda Blencie and they moved to San Bernardino, CA. He followed in his father's footsteps, working for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a laborer and ending his career with the Union Pacific Railroad as a mechanical manager. Arthur and Brenda had 3 daughters. After many years they divorced, but maintained a lifelong friendship, supporting their girls. He remarried and settled in Corona, CA. He enjoyed being Papa to his grandkids and helped raise his first born grandson, Isaiah. After surviving heart surgery in his 40's, he drew closer to the Lord, attending Calvary Chapel Harvest and Chino Hills, volunteering in Greg Louries crusades. He wanted everyone to experience the love of Jesus and was always helping others. He had an iconic mustache. When his father passed away in 1982, he was the father figure that helped his Mother until her passing in 1994. We lost our beloved Arthur on 1/8/22 due to ARDS (fluid in his lungs).

He is survived by his brothers and sisters, Lucy, Javier, Ann, Porfirio, James, and Georgina; his children, Shannon, Kristin and Brooke; and his grandchildren, Jazmine, Isaiah, Donovan, Gauge, Maddox and Joseph. Because of the seeds of faith he helped instill in us, we are confident that we will see him again. We love you, Arthur Gaxiola.

Memorial Service will be on 3/1/22 at 2:30 p.m. at Riverview Cemetery 4700 Hovley Rd, Brawley, CA 92227. Celebration of Life will be on 3/12/22 at 3 p.m. at Calvary Chapel 1923 Austin Rd El Centro, CA 92243.

JOSEPH FRANK FLORES

Feb. 9, 1973 – Feb. 12, 2022



Joseph Frank Flores, 49, passed away on February 12, 2022. Joseph Flores is survived by his daughter, Jazmin Flores.

He was born on February 9, 1973 in Brawley CA, to parents, Jose R. Flores and Jennie Ventura. He graduated from Calipatria High and attended college in Chino and Imperial Valley. Joseph built ID Marker and Valley Vet Supply with his father and shortly built his own company CJ Farms and Valley Custom Spreading.

He enjoyed BAJA Racing, spending time with family, friends and loved spending time with his granddaughter.

Services will be held at Frye Chapel from 2-5 pm on March 5, 2022.

LINDA LEE COPELAND

Feb. 13, 1950 – Feb. 16, 2022



Linda Lee Copeland, 72, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, February 16, 2022. She was born on February 13, 1950 in Pittsburgh, California, and spent most of her childhood in Brawley, California.

She met the love of her life, Jimmy Copeland at Brawley Union High School, where she graduated in 1968. They were married on August 15, 1970, and were married for 47 beautiful years.

Linda began her career in 1969 as a hairdresser at Lucilles Beauty Shop, until later opening up a hair salon of her own. She loved her clients, many of whom were seniors. She treated everyone with compassion and care and would go above and be-

yond for her clients, including picking them up and taking them home.

In September 2010, she became the Cafeteria Manager at Mulberry Elementary School. Her children, both attended Mulberry years prior. Linda was an active member of Mulberry Community Club (MCC), and served one year as President. Linda and Jimmy were both awarded the Joan Burnett Award for Recognition of Excellence for spearheading the MCC BBQ for many years.

Linda's home cooking for the students of Mulberry made her well-known around the Imperial Valley. She loved to have students submit their favorite recipes from home, and she would pick one or two recipes to be included in the monthly menu. She loved the students and staff and said these were some of her happiest memories. She retired in 2016, but continued in her retirement baking with her grandchildren and loving the time she spent with them.

Linda was a humble, loving person who was a second mother to many. She and Jimmy loved being with family and friends, and enjoyed hosting many holidays and celebrations in their home. Linda and Jimmy loved to go on fishing vacations with friends and family in Delores or Durango, CO. They traveled north to Oregon and enjoyed celebrating birthdays with Ron and Billie Graves at Pismo Beach, CA. They always made sure to enjoy the time spent at the beach during the summer in Ocean-side, CA.

Linda was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Jimmy Copeland; parents, Juanita and Bob Merrill and Herman Ball.

She is survived by her son, Brandon (Christina) Copeland; daughter, Ginger (Chris) Parish; and her grandchildren, Samantha, Julianna, Hayden, Copeland and Erin Parish.

She also leaves behind her brother, Stephen (Denice) Merrill; and sons, Trenton and Tanner from San Juan Capistrano; her cousin; Bill (Ellen) Williams and their children James, Jason and Rachel (Scott) from Austin, TX.

There will be services at Western Ave Baptist Church on Friday March 4, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. Family is asking in lieu of flowers, please donate to Western Avenue Baptist Church.

PLAN

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Now more than 70% of the country can safely remove masks indoors, the CDC says, and the percentage is expected to grow as cases continue to decline.

While most states and localities moved to relax their mask requirements even before the CDC change, many have kept mandates in place for schools, and the federal government continues to require face masks on public transportation, including airplanes. The federal mandate is to expire on March 18, and health officials did not provide any indication whether it would be extended.

Meanwhile, businesses across the country are struggling to navigate employees' lingering concerns about COVID-19 and desire for the flexibility of working from home. Many companies would like to get workers back into offices.

A key component of the administration's plan to convince American that it is safe to resume normal activities is the increasing availability of an antiviral pill from Pfizer that has been shown to reduce the risk of hospitalization from COVID-19 by 90%. By the end of the month, the administration says, 1 million pills will be available, with double that ready for use in April.

A White House official said the "test-to-treat" plan would initially roll out in hundreds of pharmacies across the country, including CVS, Walgreens, and Kroger locations, and would soon expand beyond that.

Those who test positive at the sites would be able to obtain the antiviral pills for quick use, dramatically reducing the risk of bad outcomes.

One possible problem:

The test-to-treat plan drew early concern from some pharmacists. Anne Burns, a vice president with the American Pharmacists Association, said pharmacies across the country have struggled with staffing issues in recent months. Pharmacists already doling out vaccines, prescriptions and health advice are worried about the extra time needed if they add more COVID-19 testing and treating.

"There's just a lot of considerations that go into this," she said. "It takes far longer than it takes to dispense most normal prescriptions." The administration said it also stands ready to rapidly administer millions of vaccine doses for children under 5 once the vaccines are approved by federal regulators. While there had been hope for the first shots to be authorized last month, Pfizer is now waiting on the results of a study including a third dose of the vaccine for that age group, and that will likely delay approval until April.

As part of the new strategy, the administration is calling on Congress to reinstitute tax credits for businesses that provide paid sick leave for employees who are sick with COVID-19. The White House is also asking Congress for additional funding to invest in new COVID-19 drugs, including research into the development of pan-coronavirus vaccines that would prevent against multiple strains and even several different types of viruses.

Meanwhile, federal officials emphasized they have greatly improved the public health system's capacity to identify and track any potential new variants, with new investments in surveillance testing and genomic sequencing. Zients said the administration believes that if needed, it can

authorize, produce and deliver new vaccines and treatments "in just 100 days rather than in many months or years."

Biden, in his remarks Tuesday night, said that in addition to starting the new antiviral initiative, his administration would allow people in the U.S. to order another round of free tests from the government. He said that starting next week, the administration would make available four more free tests to U.S. households through COVID-Tests.gov, which has sent more than 270 million to nearly 70 million households since it launched in mid-January.

Juan Gallego, a 58-year-old resident of Chelsea, Massachusetts, a majority Latino city north of Boston that was one of the state's hardest hit during the pandemic, says Biden's comments were appropriate, given how far the nation has come over the past two years.

"Before, we didn't know how to treat it. We were all paranoid, we didn't know what to do," he said of the virus. "Now we know, with all the experience, all we've done with the vaccines and new treatments."

Gallego, a real estate agent who during the worst of the pandemic helped make face masks and deliver groceries and other essentials to quarantined families throughout Chelsea, said safety habits won't quickly fade, especially in cities like his that took the brunt of the pain.

Many along Chelsea's bustling main street and even children in local schools have continued to mask up, although a statewide mask mandate in classrooms was lifted this week, he said.

"He sent a message of hope, not desperation," Gallego said of Biden. "We are in a much better place. And he's right."

IID

Continued from A1

The report adds "the project is planned or located in a manner that will be most compatible with the greatest public good and least private injury" and that "the real property to be acquired is necessary."

The project involves replacing 293 wooden poles prone to collapsing during high winds with 184 steel

poles snaking 18 miles from an IID electric substation southwest of El Centro to another on the city's far-eastern side.

Besides moving electricity within IID's service area, the line interconnects the area's burgeoning renewable energy sources, including solar and geothermal, with customers outside the area purchasing that electricity.

"The upgrade project will increase the transmission capacity

available to interconnect new energy projects built in IID's service territory," a fact sheet distributed at the groundbreaking stated.

Citizens is a national non-profit renewable energy firm that locally operates the Imperial Solar farm. It aids low-income customers by contributing half of its after-tax profits to fund programs such as the S-line upgrade in IID's service territory, IID stated.

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