

A Jan. 6 Reckoning Matters Even if Outrage Has Waned

It might not seem like much has changed but hundreds have been convicted for actions related to the insurrection.

January 6, 2024 at 8:00 AM EST

By **Mary Ellen Klas**

Mary Ellen Klas is a Politics and Policy Columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. A former capital bureau chief for the Miami Herald, she has covered politics and government for more than three decades.



Three years after the insurrection, justice is being meted out. *Photographer: Brent Stirton/Getty Images*

This weekend marks three years since the Jan. 6 attack on the US Capitol, and as Americans reflect on the shocking images and lies perpetrated from that day, there's also an alarming amount of revisionist history happening, particularly among voters on the right.

Many in the Republican Party, whose leaders made urgent calls to then-President Donald Trump to call off the mob, now seem engaged in a concerted effort to minimize what occurred.

Lives were lost, families were shattered, and hundreds of rioters have been convicted on charges for their actions that day. Yet, a recent Washington Post-University of Maryland poll shows that Republican loyalty to Trump and the rioters has increased since then. The same Washington Post-UMD poll found that a quarter of Americans falsely believe the Federal Bureau of Investigation instigated the attacks. Among Republicans, the poll shows, 34% believe the FBI “organized and encouraged the insurrection,” along with 30% of independents and 13% of Democrats.

Bloomberg **Opinion**

What Caused the Great Depression? Don't Trust History Textbooks

The NHS Death Spiral Requires More From Labour Than Promises

Naughty Traders Bring 2023's Sins Into 2024

Whiplashed Bond Traders Are Still Missing the Point

Although a majority of Republicans say Biden's 2020 election was legitimate, that number is down slightly from 2021. Polls show a majority of Americans aren't sympathetic to absolving those who stormed the Capitol or to forgiving Trump for the lies and fake electors scheme, but conspiracy theories about the election are still pushed and promoted. Trump's rivals refuse to confront him about it, and the election disinformation movement continues to be funded and strong.

But there is hope. We're less than two weeks away from the first 2024 presidential nominating contest and there are signs that those who planned and incited the riots and other crimes that arose from the 2020 election are being held accountable.

Kenneth Chesebro, the Trump adviser who coordinated the fake elector scheme on behalf of the Trump campaign, has pleaded guilty in Georgia, as have lawyers Sidney Powell and Jenna Ellis. As a condition of Chesebro's plea agreement, he is now testifying in other states – importantly, it appears, in Nevada, Arizona and Michigan.

Meanwhile, in Georgia, a Fulton County court has rejected former Trump Chief of Staff Mark Meadows' attempt to move the lawsuit against him to federal court on the basis that he was a federal official acting in his official capacity.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani falsely accused Georgia election workers Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss of fraud, subjecting the mother and daughter to brutal harassment from mobs who gathered at their home to threaten them and harass their family. A court ordered Giuliani to pay \$148 million in damages and, when he repeated his false claims after the verdict, he was hit with another defamation lawsuit.

Fox News, sued by Dominion Voting Systems over false claims that the company's machines were rigged against Trump, has also changed its behavior. It was ordered to pay \$787 million in a settlement agreement and the network is now cutting away from Trump rallies to correct his "untruths" when the former president spreads disinformation.

In several states, bar associations are taking steps to penalize the lawyers who engaged in spreading the disinformation and planned the crimes by stripping them of their licenses to practice law.

John Eastman, the Trump lawyer who addressed the Jan. 6 crowd on the Ellipse and falsely claimed there had been widespread election fraud, is awaiting a ruling from the California State Bar Court after a 33-day trial. Colorado's federal trial court disbarred L. Lin Wood, the lawyer who pedaled many of the fraud claims and called for former Vice President Mike Pence to be executed by a firing squad.

In Virginia, a state court disbarred Jonathon Moseley, an attorney who represented several high-profile Jan. 6 defendants, including a member of the Oath Keepers. Washington, DC, has filed charges against former Trump Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark. And Michigan's bar has begun disciplinary proceedings against at least nine lawyers, according to the online forum Just Security.

David Becker, founder of the nonprofit Center for Election Innovation & Research, who has devoted his career to election integrity, celebrates the bipartisan effort to hold accountable those who have spread lies and destabilized our democracy.

"I think Americans should appreciate and applaud the process that we are seeing," he said this week. "We've always been taught since we were youngsters in school that America is not a kingdom and the president is not a king. ... We do not give a president blanket immunity to do anything they want."

During a December Trump rally, Fox News broke away from the former president in mid-speech.

“The 2020 election was not rigged. It was not stolen,” Fox anchor Arthel Neville said in a statement that viewers have not heard from the network enough. She added: “But still, Trump is way ahead in the polls.”

Indeed, Trump is ahead in the GOP primary polls and a staggering number of Americans appear willing to whitewash his role in one of the most precarious moments in American history.

Jan. 6 was the first time a partisan mob attempted to halt the peaceful transfer of power by stopping the counting of electoral ballots. Despite the encouraging drumbeat toward accountability, a Newsweek poll found that 56% of Americans believe another Jan. 6-style event could happen again. We are still in perilous times, and Americans know it.

- Trump Took \$7.8 Million in Foreign Cash While in Office. He’d Do It Again: Timothy L. O’Brien
- Keep Trump on the Ballot and Let Voters Decide: Nia-Malika Henderson
- DeSantis Is Flaming Out and Blaming Trump: Mary Ellen Klas

Want more Bloomberg Opinion? [OPIN <GO>](#) . Or subscribe to [our daily newsletter](#) .
This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

To contact the author of this story:
Mary Ellen Klas at maryeklas@bloomberg.net

To contact the editor responsible for this story:
Victoria Benning at vbenning@bloomberg.net



Mary Ellen Klas is a Politics and Policy Columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. A former capital bureau chief for the Miami Herald, she has covered politics and government for more than three decades.

✓ Following

[Terms of Service](#) [Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information](#) [Trademarks](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

©2024 Bloomberg L.P. All Rights Reserved.

[Careers](#) [Made in NYC](#) [Advertise](#) [Ad Choices](#) [Help](#)