



NEW REPORT

***Democracy in Danger:
Throughout August, MAGA Republicans
Promoted Political Violence And Worked
To Overturn The Will of Voters***

August 2022

Defend Democracy Project

Democracy in Danger: **Throughout August, MAGA Republicans Promoted** **Political Violence And Worked To Overturn The** **Will of Voters**

While few things will ever rival January 2021 for attacks on our democracy by one of two political parties (hopefully), August 2022 will not soon be forgotten. We started the month with revelations about the missing texts from Jan. 6 deleted by the Secret Service and Department of Homeland Security; by the end, Lindsey Graham was on TV threatening more violence if Trump is held accountable for his crimes. With the FBI search and seizure of highly-sensitive documents at Mar-a-Lago, former President Trump and his supporters suggesting that he is above the law and directing violent attacks against the FBI, violent threats against our nation's record keepers at the National Archives, election deniers winning contests for elected office, and subpoenas from the Fulton County grand jury investigation in Georgia, it was quite a month — and August isn't over just yet.

The FBI Executed A Search Warrant At Mar-a-Lago

August 9, 2022: Federal Law Enforcement Executed A Search Warrant at Mar-a-Lago, Seizing Illegally-Withheld Classified Documents. On Aug. 9, federal agents executed a search warrant at former President Trump's Mar-A-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Florida seeking [classified documents he failed to return](#) after leaving the White House. In a statement, Trump claimed that the FBI had "raided and occupied" his estate. In response, MAGA Republicans unquestionably fell in line with Trump and called for extreme remedies like defunding the FBI, even threatening violence and secession.

August 12, 2022: Trump Released the Search Warrant for Mar-a-Lago, Revealing Three Criminal Charges. Days after the search, Trump released his copy of the search warrant to the public. The warrant revealed that [federal law enforcement was investigating Trump](#) for removal or destruction of records, obstruction of justice and violating the Espionage Act for [refusing to return](#) national security documents upon request from the National Archives. Conviction under all three statutes could result in imprisonment or fines, and conviction under the Espionage Act carries the possibility of [disqualification from holding office](#).

August 26, 2022: A Federal Judge Unsealed the Redacted Affidavit Used to Justify the FBI Search and Seizure at Mar-a-Lago. On Aug. 26, the Department of Justice [released a redacted affidavit](#) explaining the evidence of probable cause behind the search warrant. The affidavit revealed that Trump [took highly classified national security documents](#) from the White House, Federal officials at the National Archives spent more than a year trying

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to retrieve the documents from Trump, and notified law enforcement after concluding that their disclosure could compromise national security. The rationale behind the redactions was based on predicted obstruction of justice and witness intimidation from MAGA Republicans.

MAGA Republicans Attacked Federal Law Enforcement & Called for Violence After Mar-a-Lago Search

August 9, 2022: Republicans Reacted To The FBI Search In Violent Terms, Even Moving Towards Secessionist Rhetoric. After the FBI executed a search warrant at Mar-a-Lago, Trump supporters began [actively calling for civil war](#). Right-wing internet forums became [significantly more active and militant than usual](#) following the incident and MAGA, QAnon, and far-right message boards & Telegram channels “lit up” with violent calls-to-action as top MAGA Republicans compared the search to various authoritarian regimes. Florida Senator **Marco Rubio** [wrote](#), “Using government power to persecute political opponents is something we have seen many times from 3rd world Marxist dictatorships. But never before in America.” Likewise, **Donald Trump Jr.** [tweeted](#), “Biden and the Dems are following in the footsteps of all the 3rd world Communist Dictators that the left worships.” Shortly after the former President released a statement on the search, Trump Jr. [wrote](#), “DOJ is ripping this country apart with how they're openly targeting their political enemies.” Finally, Arizona Governor candidate **Kari Lake** [released a statement](#) demanding that states act to ‘strip’ the federal government of power, writing, “The 10th Amendment can and will save our Republic and the road to stripping the Feds of power travels right through Arizona. We must fire the Federal Government. As Governor, I will fight these Tyrants [sic] with every fiber of my being. America — dark days lie ahead for us.”

- **MAGA Republicans Began Calling to ‘Defund’ and ‘Destroy’ the FBI and Department of Justice, Undermining Law Enforcement.** Republican elected officials fell in line with Trump, arguing in favor of “defunding” and dismantling the federal law enforcement system, to the point of calling for all elected Republicans to avoid accountability altogether. Rep. **Marjorie Taylor Greene** (GA-14) [proclaimed](#), “we have to defund and make cuts in the Department of Justice...and then completely cut out of their budget the ability to persecute Republicans.” Greene, who reportedly [requested a presidential pardon](#) after Jan. 6, earlier [proclaimed](#), “DEFUND THE FBI!” Rep. **Paul Gosar** (AZ-4) [posted](#), “We must destroy the FBI. We must save America. I stand with Donald J. Trump.” Gosar, who also [requested a presidential pardon](#) after Jan. 6, [later posted](#), “I will support a complete dismantling and elimination of the democrat brown shirts known as the FBI. This is too much for our republic to withstand.” Rep. **Matt Gaetz** (FL-1) [wrote](#), “I stand with President Trump!” Like Gosar and Greene, Gaetz also [requested a presidential pardon](#) after Jan. 6.
- **MAGA Republicans Wanted to Arrest FBI Agents and Spread Fear.** The House Judiciary GOP [tweeted](#), “If they can do it to a former President, imagine what they can

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do to you.” Several Florida lawmakers [called for the arrest of federal agents](#), with one state lawmaker and defeated House candidate **Anthony Sabatini** urging Florida to “sever all ties” with the Department of Justice. He [wrote](#), “It’s time for us in the Florida Legislature to call an emergency legislative session & amend our laws regarding federal agencies.” Other MAGA Republicans have [sought to instill fear in the public](#) by suggesting that citizens could soon be targeted by federal agents. Fellow defeated Floridian House candidate **Laura Loomer** [wrote](#) on Telegram, “If you sit on the sidelines and refuse to act, they will attack you and your family next.”

August 11, 2022: MAGA Republicans Remained Complicit In An Act of Domestic Terrorism Against the FBI. On Aug. 11, a man who was [at the Capitol on Jan. 6](#) attempted to breach an FBI office in Cincinnati, Ohio while armed with an assault rifle, body armor, and a nail gun. The suspect was killed after an [hours-long standoff](#) with law enforcement agents, yet most Republicans refused to denounce a violent act of domestic terrorism undoubtedly directly influenced by their own lies and conspiracies. Worse still, some MAGA Republicans even defended his actions, [opening the door](#) to further violence against federal agents. The GOP’s [silence spoke volumes](#), and the Republicans who threatened the FBI and refused to condemn the shooter were [complicit in the violence](#) it inspired.

August 28, 2022: Lindsey Graham Suggests ‘Riots In The Streets’ If Trump Is Prosecuted Over Classified Documents. On Aug. 28, Sen. Graham reportedly warned of “[riots in the streets](#)” if former President Trump is prosecuted for his mishandling of classified documents withheld from the National Archives and seized by the FBI at Mar-a-Lago. Graham [stated](#) on Fox News, “If there’s a prosecution of Donald Trump for mishandling classified information, after the Clinton debacle... there’ll be riots in the streets.” Hours after the interview, Trump [shared a clip](#) on Truth Social. Graham also warned of riots over the Fulton county grand jury investigating attempts by Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election in Georgia.

August 29, 2022: Trump Demanded A ‘New Election’, Citing Baseless Conspiracy Theories About 2020 Election Fraud. On Aug. 29, Trump took to Truth Social to [baselessly claim](#) that “Trump would have easily won the 2020 Presidential Election,” and wrote that should be declared the winner of the 2020 election or, “and this would be the minimal solution, declare the 2020 Election irreparably compromised and have a new Election, immediately!” The post further revealed Trump and his MAGA allies’ ongoing plot to threaten democratic institutions and overturn election results nearly two years later.

MAGA Republicans Prevailed in Primaries Across the Nation

August 2–3, 2022: MAGA Republicans Swept Primaries in Arizona, Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, and Washington. During the first week of August, Trump’s ticket prevailed in primary elections across Arizona, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee,

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and Washington, where dozens of MAGA Republicans won GOP primaries. Many races featured [candidates implicated in Donald Trump's campaign of revenge](#) against Republicans who refused to go along with his plot to overturn the 2020 election, as Trump's hand-picked challengers [defeated](#) Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers along with [pro-impeachment](#) House [incumbents](#) Peter Meijer (MI-3) and Jamie Herrera Beutler (WA-3). In highly-competitive Arizona and Michigan, MAGA governor candidates [Kari Lake](#) and [Tudor Dixon](#) advanced to the November ballot [alongside](#) far-right Secretary of State nominees Mark Finchem and Kristina Karamo. Throughout the Midwest, long-time election deniers and conspiracy theorists were also highly successful. MAGA Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt [won the state's Governor primary](#) while Kris Kobach moved one step closer to filling Schmidt's current role, Missouri's Eric (Schmitt) [beat](#) Eric (Greitens) in the Senate race, and Tennessee Governor Bill Lee is headed for reelection on the same ballot as a MAGA 'Stop the Steal' rally organizer [favored to win](#) a redistricted Nashville-based House seat. Finally, in the Pacific Northwest, Trump-endorsed election deniers like Senate [nominee](#) Tiffany Smiley are poised to challenge numerous incumbents this fall.

August 9, 2022: MAGA Republican Candidates Won Primaries In Wisconsin, Minnesota, Connecticut, & Even Vermont. On Aug. 9, Trump-backed [election deniers](#) won GOP nominating contests in Wisconsin and Minnesota, where MAGA Governor candidates [Tim Michels](#) and [Scott Jensen](#) advanced to the November ballot in their respective states. Candidates [who want to dismantle the election system](#) and spread lies about voter fraud also [won primaries](#) for secretary of state in Connecticut, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Vermont. In Connecticut, RNC member Leora Levy [upset a former state House minority leader](#) for the nomination to face Sen. Richard Blumenthal after receiving a last minute endorsement from Donald Trump. Finally, in Vermont, a MAGA newcomer who said he "wished" he had been at the January 6 insurrection [won a surprise victory](#) in the GOP Senate race.

August 16, 2022: Frontier MAGA Republicans Prevailed in Hawaii, Alaska, and Wyoming. Trump's ticket prevailed in primary elections even in the furthest reaches of the country on Aug. 16, with MAGA Republicans advancing in Hawaii, Alaska, and Wyoming. January 6th committee vice chair [Liz Cheney was defeated by her Trump-endorsed MAGA challenger](#), Harriet Hageman, emphasizing the unprecedented scope of Trump's influence over the GOP. Cheney vowed to continue her fight against Donald Trump and threats to democracy, as Wyoming saw [another election denier](#), state Rep. Chuck Gray, win the primary for secretary of state. Gray, who believes the election was "stolen" from Trump and made screenings of the debunked 2000 Mules documentary a key component of his campaign, is all-but-certain to become the next Wyoming secretary of state. In Hawaii, an "Audit the Vote" advocate [claimed the Republican nomination for lieutenant governor](#) in a bid for one of the state's top election administration offices. In the Last Frontier, Alaska's unique top-four primary system saw several election conspiracy theorists [advance to the November general election](#) – including Sarah Palin for the open House seat and both Senator Lisa Murkowski and her [Trump-backed challenger](#), Kelly Tshibaka. Final ranked choice voting results are due on Aug. 31, and will [reveal the results](#)

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[of a special House election](#) that could see Palin sent to Congress to complete the remainder of the late Rep. Don Young's term.

August 23, 2022: MAGA Election Deniers Advanced Past GOP Primaries In Florida, New York, and Oklahoma. In the final high-profile midterm primary, Florida and New York [elevated another large group of MAGA Republicans](#) running for office with plans to sabotage future elections based on false claims that the 2020 election was “stolen.” In Florida, unabashedly anti-democracy Governor Ron DeSantis was [unopposed in his primary](#) as election deniers won GOP nominations in 21 of the state's 28 Congressional districts. Conspiracy theorists, Jan. 6 participants and election liars won primaries across the Empire State as well, although high profile extremist Carl Paladino was [defeated](#) in his attempt to win a deep-red House primary. Finally, in Oklahoma, election denier and Jan. 6 apologist Markwayne Mullin [won a runoff election](#) for the GOP Senate nomination, all but ensuring he will be a U.S. Senator come January 2023.

[In the States: Criminal Investigations Over 2020 Election Interference By MAGA Republicans Continued](#)

August 8, 2022: Michigan Attorney General Announces Probe Into MAGA Republicans Breaching Voting Machines After 2020 Election. In early August, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel [requested a special prosecutor](#) to investigate a MAGA scheme to illegally dismantle voting machines in the state after the 2020 election spearheaded in court by her GOP opponent, Matt DePerno. Working [alongside](#) DePerno, the pro-Trump CEO of right-wing cybersecurity firm Cyber Ninjas Doug Logan made copies of sensitive election data in four Michigan counties after the 2020 election. Logan [is at the heart of the criminal investigation](#) into MAGA attempts to [illegally access](#) voting machines in at least five states [across the country](#). In response, DePerno joined far-right Michigan Secretary of State candidate Kristina Karamo in [calling for Nessel's impeachment](#).

August 8–9, 2022: Rudy Giuliani Unsuccessfully Sought to Avoid Testifying Before Fulton Grand Jury. On Aug. 8, Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani sought to [delay his testimony](#) to the Fulton County grand jury, arguing that he could not travel to the state due to an illness. In December 2020, Giuliani was [invited](#) to a Georgia Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing on “election integrity,” where he blamed Atlanta poll workers for [debunked](#) claims of fraud alongside Trump lawyers [John Eastman](#) and [Jenna Ellis](#). Giuliani also [oversaw efforts](#) to put forward a [slate](#) of 16 illegitimate electors in Georgia. Earlier in the summer, Giuliani was informed he was a [target of the investigation](#). The next day, a Fulton county judge [ordered Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani to testify](#) before a grand jury about his attempts to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia. Pointing out his recent cross-country travel (publicized on social media after the motion was filed), the judge [rejected his motion](#) and Giuliani [testified in court](#) on Aug. 17.

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August 15, 2022: A Federal Judge Ordered Senator Lindsey Graham To Comply With His Fulton Grand Jury Subpoena. On Jul. 6, the Fulton county grand jury investigation [issued a subpoena](#) for Senator Lindsey Graham, citing an inquiry about his two phone calls to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger about overturning absentee ballots after the 2020 election – which Graham immediately contested and moved to quash. On Aug. 15, a federal judge [ordered](#) Lindsey Graham to testify as a witness in the Fulton grand jury investigation, rejecting his assertions that the phone calls constituted “legislating” and therefore immune to court scrutiny, ruling that his testimony would not likely interfere with any official duties during the Senate’s August recess. She also [ruled](#) that his “efforts to ‘cajole’ or ‘exhort’ state election officials to change practices or alter election results” were “political in nature rather than legislative.” Graham [appealed](#) the ruling two days later, though Fulton County DA Fani Willis warned in a court filing that any [further setbacks](#) could “delay the revelation of an entire category of relevant witnesses or information...[and] would significantly harm the interests and administration of the [grand jury].” On Aug. 21, the appeals court also [rejected Graham’s appeal](#), ruling that the Senator could only invoke his speech & debate clause protections for specific predetermined questions and/or categories of information [to be decided](#) on an [aggressive scheduling order](#) by August 31.

August 25, 2022: Fulton County Grand Jury Announced Witness Statement Requests For Former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows & Several Trump Campaign Lawyers. On Aug. 25, DA Fani Willis announced she would be [seeking testimony](#) from former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, Trump lawyer Sidney Powell, and several other Trump campaign surrogates. Hours later, a state judge [rejected a motion to quash](#) eleven GOP false electors’ grand jury subpoenas.

August 29, 2022: Georgia Governor Brian Kemp Ordered to Testify Before Fulton Grand Jury. On Aug. 29, a federal judge [ordered Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to testify](#) about attempts to coerce him to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The week prior, he had [attempted to dismiss](#) his grand jury subpoena. In December 2020, Trump called Gov. Kemp and [urged him to overturn](#) Biden’s victory in Georgia just days before the “[safe harbor](#)” deadline for states to certify their 2020 election results. Kemp [testified about the phone call](#) before the grand jury in May 2022. Court documents released the week prior had revealed that the Governor privately [fought against the terms of his subpoena](#) issued by the Fulton county grand jury District Attorney Fani Willis.

Federal Investigations Concerning January 6 Deepened

August 10–11, 2022: FBI Agents Seized Rep. Scott Perry’s (PA-10) Phone & Delivered Subpoenas To Pennsylvania GOP Lawmakers Over Jan. 6 Investigation. On Aug. 10, House incumbent Scott Perry’s phone was [seized by the FBI](#). Rep. Perry, who [frequently communicated](#) with the Trump White House about overturning the 2020 election, is a [witness](#) in the ongoing DOJ investigation into Trump’s 2020 false elector scheme. One day

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later, [federal agents delivered subpoenas](#) to [several Republican lawmakers](#) at the state Capitol in Harrisburg. In response, Perry [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Department of Justice this morning, seeking to block federal law enforcement agents from searching his seized cell phone.

August 11, 2022: Congressional Watchdog Revealed Memo On Missing Texts on Jan. 6 From Secret Service & DHS Records Deliberately Delayed. In late July, the Secret Service revealed that top agency officials [deleted](#) text messages relating to the events of Jan. 6 – in spite of prior [records requests](#) from four House committees and Inspector General Joseph V. Cuffari. The agency offered [shifting explanations](#) about the disappearing texts, first attributing the loss to a software upgrade, then as part of a device replacement program, then as part of a pre-planned “[system migration](#).” DHS officials later revealed that text messages sent on Jan. 6 from government phones issued to three top two DHS officials under the Trump administration (Acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf, Acting Deputy DHS Secretary Ken Cuccinelli, and Acting Under Secretary Randolph “Tex” Alles) were [also lost](#) during a ‘reset’ of the devices. On Aug. 11, we learned that DHS knew about the missing texts, but Cuffari [refused to release a memo](#) informing Congress of the deletion. Less than a week later, it was revealed that the agency had identified a social media account threatening Speaker Nancy Pelosi two days before the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol, but [did not notify Capitol Police](#) until the insurrection was underway.