

JANUARY 6 PUBLIC HEARINGS AREN'T CHANGING MINDS

Carl Golden, June 20, 2022



As the Congressional committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U. S. Capitol heads into its final public hearings phase, early indications are that - despite compelling testimony - the needle on the public opinion meter has barely budged, and the impact on the congressional midterm elections as well as the 2024 presidential contest will be minimal.

In short, despite predictions the much-hyped committee's findings would shake the nation to its core, it's been neither a mind changer nor a game changer.

National Democrats overwhelmingly continue to demand former president Donald Trump be held accountable in a court of law for his role in egging on his supporters to storm the Capitol and prevent the certification of Joe Biden as the next president. Meanwhile, Republican leaders for the most part are adamant that the committee is a blatant politically-driven effort to blame their party for an assault on democracy itself and prevent Trump from seeking to regain the office in 2024.

The competing versions are locked in, and any hope one side can persuade the other to come around to its way of thinking is futile.

While a clear public majority supports a congressional inquiry into the events of Jan. 6 and what role Trump, his associates and staff played in them, other polling suggests it is not a top of the mind issue that motivates significant voter turnout.

With the president's approval rating plunging to less than 40 percent and a stunning 70 percent of Americans believing the nation is headed in the wrong direction, Republicans are on the cusp of seizing control of the House by a handsome margin and a slim Senate majority is within reach.

The deliberations of the Jan. 6 committee and the revelations of misbehavior and persistent falsehoods at the highest level of the executive office will have little influence on the election outcome.

Biden and his party's congressional majorities were brought to the brink of a seismic loss of power by the ravages of unprecedented inflation, erosion of wages, shortages and soaring costs of essential commodities, gasoline crossing the historic \$5 per gallon threshold, and rising rates of violent crime.

All have exacted a personal toll and continue to do so, undermining public confidence in the ability of the administration to deal effectively with them. Increasing speculation that the nation will tumble into a recession has exacerbated the disquiet gripping the country along with rising pessimism that the administration is adrift and lacking a sense of urgency.

As horrific as the assault on the Capitol and its aftermath of lies and deceit have been, voters will respond on their individual experiences and hardships and a belief that a massive reappraisal is necessary to restore economic vitality.

Nearly 18 months ago, millions of Americans watched in real time as mobs breached the Capitol, fought with law enforcement, trashed offices and sent members of Congress fleeing to safety.

Trump, to his everlasting discredit, stood by, refusing all entreaties to urge the protestors to withdraw and leave the building. He continued to baselessly insist he had won re-election and was cheated out of his victory by massive voter fraud.

He spent months pursuing one avenue after another to delegitimize the election, culminating on Jan. 6 by demanding Vice President Mike Pence reject the state electoral outcomes, an act for which there exists no constitutional or statutory basis.

Trump's actions, according to the committee, were part of a broad conspiracy to stage a coup, overturn the election, and remain in power.

He relied upon sycophantic advisers who played to his belief that the election was rigged while ignoring those who attempted to convince him his arguments were fantasy and warned that continued efforts to change the outcome risked crossing into criminal conduct.

Whether the committee will deliver criminal referrals to the Department of Justice is a matter of internal dispute at the moment.

But, for the Democratic Party to overcome the funk into which the nation has fallen by relying on tales of widespread misconduct by the previous Administration - no matter how egregious - is equivalent to the toils of Sisyphus in pushing the boulder up the mountainside.

Being crushed by it appears to be a foregone conclusion.

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