

AD

CONGRESS

Cruz leads group of senators seeking to challenge Electoral College count

The group of Republicans insisted their effort wasn't an attempt to thwart Biden or overturn the election.



Sen. Ted Cruz. | Greg Nash/Pool via AP

By **BURGESS EVERETT** and **EVAN SEMONES**

01/02/2021 01:36 PM EST





Nearly a quarter of Senate Republicans are officially preparing to challenge President-elect Joe Biden's Electoral College win on Jan. 6, a stunning development that demonstrates just how far some in the GOP will go to align themselves with President Donald Trump's flailing claims that the election was stolen from him.

Joining Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), eleven more Republican senators announced Saturday they will challenge Biden's election victory next week when Congress gathers to certify the Electoral College vote. The movement is led by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who circulated the idea among Senate Republicans of voting against certification of the election unless there's an election audit.

AD

The move is opposed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), though the GOP leadership is not whipping against the effort to prevent the certification of Biden as president.

In a statement on Saturday afternoon, 11 current and incoming GOP lawmakers said they intended to reject the electors from states where they claimed “unprecedented allegations of voter fraud, violations and lax enforcement of election law” arose until a 10-day audit of the election results in each state has been completed.

“Voter fraud has posed a persistent challenge in our elections, although its breadth and scope are disputed,” the group said. “By any measure, the allegations of fraud and irregularities in the 2020 election exceed any in our lifetimes.”

The group of Republicans insisted their effort wasn’t an attempt to thwart Biden or overturn the election, but rather aimed to protect “election integrity.” Likewise, Hawley said he was not trying to overturn the election.

“These are matters worthy of the Congress, and entrusted to us to defend,” the Saturday statement read. “And every one of us should act together to ensure that the election was lawfully conducted under the Constitution and to do everything we can to restore faith in our Democracy.”

The faction of GOP lawmakers includes Sens. Marsha Blackburn (Tenn.), Mike Braun (Ind.), Cruz (Texas), Steve Daines (Mont.), Ron Johnson (Wis.), John Kennedy (La.) and James Lankford (Okla.), as well as Sen.-elects Bill Hagerty (Tenn.), Cynthia Lummis (Wyo.), Roger Marshall (Kan.) and Tommy Tuberville (Ala.).

Lankford, Johnson and Kennedy are all up for reelection in 2022, and the vote will effectively become a wedge issue within the Republican Party. Republicans who vote against Trump and allow the certification of Biden's election could find themselves with primary challenges. Trump has already endorsed a primary challenge to Senate Majority Whip John Thune (R-S.D.).

But many Republicans say the effort to challenge the election results doesn't make a ton of sense.

"There's good constitutional and other legal grounds to say: You had your day in court, 60 different lawsuits in state courts, you had a chance to appeal those to the Supreme Court, and as I read the law once a state certifies its electoral vote its conclusive. So that's sort of the lay of the land," said Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) in an interview on Friday.

But the 11 GOP senators said the courts should have examined the issue more closely: "Ideally, the courts would have heard evidence and resolved these claims of serious election fraud. Twice, the Supreme Court had the opportunity to do so; twice, the Court declined."

Hawley pledged on Wednesday to challenge Biden's win in Pennsylvania and other states when Congress convenes on Jan. 6 to certify the results of the 2020 election.