

Trump: I'll accept election results — if I win

DELAWARE, Ohio (AP) — Mocking his critics, Donald Trump pledged Thursday to fully accept the outcome of next month's presidential election — if he wins. The Republican said he reserved the right to contest questionable results, deepening his unsubstantiated assertions that the race against Hillary Clinton could be rigged against him.



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump gestures as he arrives to speak at a campaign rally at the Delaware County Fair Thursday in Ohio.

Trump's comments came a day after his stunning refusal in the final presidential debate to say whether he would concede to Clinton if he loses. His resistance, threatening to undermine the essence of American democracy, was roundly rejected by fellow Republicans.

Arizona Sen. John McCain, the 2008 GOP nominee, called the peaceful transfer of power "the pride of our country."

"I didn't like the outcome of the 2008 election. But I had a duty to concede, and I did so without reluctance," McCain said in a lengthy statement. "A concession isn't just an exercise in graciousness. It is an act of respect for the will of the American people, a respect that is every American leader's first responsibility."

With the presidential race slipping away from him,

Trump has repeatedly raised the specter of a rigged election, despite no evidence of widespread voter fraud heading toward Election Day or in previous presidential contests. His top advisers and running mate Mike Pence have tried to soften his comments, only to watch helplessly as he plunges ahead.

Asked in Wednesday's debate if he would accept the election results and concede to Clinton if he loses, Trump said: "I will tell you at the time. I will keep you in suspense."

Clinton slammed Trump's comments as "horrifying,"

and fellow Democrats piled on Thursday.

"That undermines our democracy," President Barack Obama said while campaigning for Clinton in Florida. "Our democracy depends on people knowing their vote matters."

His wife, first lady Michelle Obama, told 7,000 Clinton supporters in Republican-voting Arizona Thursday that Trump was threatening to "ignore our voices and reject the outcome of this election." She said that's the same as "threatening the very idea of America itself."

Trump's comments overshadowed his attempts to diminish Clinton's credibility during the debate. He entered the contest desperate to reshape the race and attract new voters who are deeply skeptical of his brash temperament and fitness for office, but it appeared unlikely he accomplished those goals.

Campaigning Thursday in must-win Ohio, Trump tried to make light of the situation.

"I would like to promise and pledge to all of my voters and supporters and to all of the people of the United States that I will totally accept the results of this great and historic presidential election," he said. After letting that vow hang in the air for a few seconds, he added, "If I win."

The Republican nominee said he would accept "a clear election result" but reserved his right to "contest or file a legal challenge" if he loses. He brushed off the likelihood of that happening with a confident prediction that "we're not going to lose."

Yet numerous Republican leaders concede Trump is heading for defeat barring a significant shift in the campaign's closing days. The GOP's top concern now is

salvaging its majority in the Senate, followed closely by worries over the Republicans' once comfortable grip on the House.

"The landscape has gotten a lot tougher for Republicans in the House," said Liesl Hickey, a Republican strategist involved with some of those races. In Pennsylvania, Sen. Pat Toomey said Trump's comments were "irresponsible."

Maine Gov. Paul LePage called Trump's comments an "absolute stupid move" and advised him to "take your licks and let's move on."

U.S. elections are run by local elected officials — Republicans, in many of the most competitive states.

Trump's campaign pointed to Al Gore and George W. Bush in 2000 as an example of why it would be premature for Trump to say he'd acquiesce on Nov. 8. That election, which played out for weeks until the Supreme Court weighed in, didn't center on allegations of fraud, but on proper vote-counting after an extremely close outcome in Florida led to a mandatory recount.

Trump tried to turn the tables on Clinton by

accusing her of "cheating" and suggesting she should "resign from the race." He cited a hacked email that showed her campaign was tipped off about a question she'd be asked in a CNN town hall meeting during the Democratic primary.

"Can you imagine if I got the questions? They would call for the re-establishment of the electric chair, do you agree?" Trump said at a rally in Ohio.

Trump's effort to shift the conversation back to Clinton focused on an email from longtime Democratic operative Donna Brazile to Clinton's campaign in March with the subject line "From time to time I get the questions in advance." It contained the wording of a death penalty question that Brazile suggested Clinton would be asked.

Brazile, now the acting Democratic National Committee chairwoman, was a CNN contributor at the time she sent the email, one of thousands disclosed publicly by WikiLeaks after Clinton's campaign chairman's emails were hacked. Clinton's campaign has said Russia was behind the hack.

TRIAL: 'The people have to insist that the government is not our master'

Continued from 1A

defendants as mere protesters who should not have been feared.

"I just sat through five weeks of a trial about threatening federal employees without hearing a single threat," he said.

The prosecution returned fire in its rebuttal, saying it did not matter whether occupiers actually impeded employees, but rather that they intended to do so.

"Everyone had a different role in this conspiracy," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Craig Gabriel.

This came following closing arguments by Ryan Bundy, Schindler, and attorneys representing Shawna Cox, David Fry, Jeff Banta and Neil Wampler.

Bundy, who is representing himself, was passionate and occasionally emotional. He defended all occupiers' actions at the refuge, his own in Robert "LaVoy" Finicum's truck during the Jan. 26 traffic stop, and even invoked Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"I ask you to enter a verdict of not guilty on all counts," Bundy told the jury, "not just for me, but for all of us."

Bundy argued it is in the government's interest to put down the occupation because they see it as a threat to power. On Tuesday, Marcus Mumford presented a list of government witnesses, noting the vast majority of them worked for the government in some capacity.

The defense points to this as a flaw in the prosecution's case.

"They're all paid to administer power," Bundy said, later adding, "The people have to insist that the government is not our master; they are our servants."

Bundy said the occupation had "nothing to do with impeding and preventing the employees of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge."

"We did not know their names

... we did not know whose seats we were sitting in," Bundy said. "And we didn't care."

Acknowledging the callousness of his statement, Bundy said their cause was something bigger than taking over a federally-owned bird sanctuary.

Bundy maintained the defendants were nonviolent, despite the presence of firearms throughout the occupation. Bundy, who did not take the witness stand at trial, said though he had a weapon in Finicum's truck, he only took it out of its holster to put it on the floor in the backseat. In a video of the traffic stop filmed by fellow occupier Shawna Cox, Bundy can be seen holding the weapon.

"Despite being shot at numerous times, despite being shot myself, I still did not return fire," Bundy said of the traffic stop. Bundy was arrested during that stop and sustained an injury to his arm, although it has not been officially determined if a bullet or a piece of shrapnel hit him.

Remaining defense attorneys tried to poke holes in the prosecution's case, whether it pertained to their client's particular case or the occupation as a whole.

Matt Schindler accused law enforcement of helping to fuel the occupation by limiting engagement with those at the refuge. Schindler called the roadside meeting between Bundy and Harney County Sheriff David Ward a photo op.

Ward treated Bundy "like he was some kind of police dignitary," rather than someone wanted for illegal activity, Schindler said.

AUSA Craig Gabriel said it was impractical for the defense to suggest the FBI needed to ask occupiers to leave in order for them to do so.

"Just play that out in your mind if the FBI had rolled up and said, 'Hey, guys, time to go,'" Gabriel said, pointing to the 34 weapons and 16,000 rounds of ammunition recovered from the refuge.

POLITICS: White women have overtaken men in earning college degrees

Continued from 1A

in hushed watercooler conversations and boisterous barroom exchanges and, most of all, in the course of a presidential campaign in which Trump has become their champion and their hope.

At this moment in American history, to be white and male means, for many, to feel centuries of privilege and values slipping away. To many others, the notion of white men being marginalized is ludicrous, their history a study in privilege. But data show some real losses, even as they maintain advantages:

- Whites' household net worth fell dramatically in the Great Recession. (But the declines of blacks and Hispanics were far larger, and whites still have an average net worth about 13 times greater than blacks and 10 times greater than Hispanics.)

- White home ownership is down from a decade ago. (But black and Hispanic home ownership, already lower, dropped at a far sharper rate.)

- White women have overtaken men in earning college degrees. (But white men still hold a big educational advantage over blacks and Hispanics.)

- The number of incarcerated white men has ballooned. (But black and Hispanic men remain far more likely to be jailed.)

- Fueled by suicides, drug overdoses and alcohol-related illnesses, mortality rates for middle-age whites have increased even as they continue to fall among middle-age blacks and Hispanics. (Still, white men continue to have a longer life

expectancy than black men, though shorter than Hispanics.)

No one cites metrics like these on air this day, but it's clear some of the listeners have felt their toll.

Stephen Sanders is 49 and was once an X-ray technician. He says his skill and seniority were ignored when he applied for a supervisory job that ultimately went to a black candidate. When Trump announced his candidacy, Sanders was thrilled to hear someone give voice to his feelings about immigration and outsourcing and restoring opportunity for guys like him. He felt he was seeing decades of painful history starting to be reversed. He wants to live a better life than his father, but he doesn't. "The theme about the American experience is to get better and to do more," he says. "I've never experienced it. I've always struggled."

Jon Hayes also dials in this day. He is 55 and once owned a construction business. It folded and he lost his house, he said, when it became impossible to compete against the cheap labor of immigrants who came to the U.S. illegally. He fell back on a career in auto mechanics and hoped to retire this year, but has put it off. A grown son still lives at home, and for all the setbacks Hayes has had, he believes he's still able to say something that he's not sure the 29-year-old will: He achieved a better life than his parents.

"I just don't think the opportunity is out there now that there used to be," he says.

They are far from alone in their pessimism. A Kaiser Family Foundation-CNN

poll released in September compared white college graduates and the white, black and Hispanic working class. Working-class whites were least likely to say that they're satisfied with their influence in politics, that the federal government represents their views, and that they believe their children will achieve a better standard of living than them. They were most likely to say it has become harder to get ahead financially and find good jobs in recent years, and to blame economic problems on the federal government and immigrants working here illegally.

Roberts, 53, sees the hurt across the U.S., but dismisses the idea of white privilege. His parents were never in his life, he says. He was left with grandparents and, when they grew too old, he was emancipated at age 15 and landed at a boys' ranch. He went on to earn an MBA and law degree and shifted 25 years ago to begin a life in radio.

He first delivered his "I want my country back" rant, impromptu, about two years ago on one of those days when his listeners' despair was overwhelming. He keeps an MP3 of the audio on his computer and airs it every now and again when it seems right. He clicks the file this afternoon and it begins to play.

"I want my country back, and the only way, the only way I'm ever going to be able to get this country back is if I reach out to the brothers and sisters that all feel the very same way and say, 'Hell, no, you can't have the country.'"

"Stop it! How many different ways do we say stop it!?"

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