

CHAOS AT THE CAPITOL

Photos by The Associated Press and The Washington Post

Angry supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday, marching through the building, shouting and waving Trump, American and Confederate flags and forcing a halt to congressional deliberations over challenges to Joe Biden's Electoral College victory.

Lawmakers were evacuated. Demonstrators fought with Capitol Police and then forced their way into the building, not long after a huge rally near the White House during which Trump egged them on to march to Capitol Hill. Later, the president urged them by video to "go home," but many did not heed his message.

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Amanda Voisard/The Washington Post
People stand outside the Capitol on Wednesday. The Washington Monument can be seen in the distance. Supporters were gathering at President Donald Trump's urging.



Police hold off Trump supporters who tried to break through a police barrier at the Capitol.

Julio Cortez/AP



President Trump speaks during a rally protesting the Electoral College certification of Joe Biden outside the White House on Wednesday. "We will never give up, we will never concede," he said. Some supporters left the rally early, heading to the Capitol building.

Evan Vucci/AP



People shelter in the House gallery as Trump supporters try to break into the House chamber at the Capitol.

Andrew Harnik/AP



Trump supporters confront U.S. Capitol Police in the hallway outside of the Senate chamber.

Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

Delegation

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In the House, one door was barricaded as well as locked.

Protesters later were able to break in, trashing the chambers as well as briefly occupying offices, before officers with tear gas drove them out.

When he was finally in a shelter-in-place position with security, Wyden said the violence that led to at least one death was the fault of the resident of the White House at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"What's happening today in our nation's Capitol is a direct assault on democracy, a riot by insurrectionists that caps off four years of Donald Trump fanning the flames of fanaticism," Wyden said in a statement. "Every Republican lawmaker who supported his efforts to overturn a legitimate election shares responsibility for the violence at the heart of our democracy."

Wyden said later that Trump had to be held responsible for the rioting. He had encouraged protesters to come to the Electoral College count, promising a "wild" time.

Trump also addressed the protesters prior to the convening of the vote in the Capitol, repeating his claims that the election he lost had been stolen by Democrats.

The United States Constitution calls for Congress to ver-

ify the Electoral College vote count in the presidential election that Biden won by over 7 million votes in the popular vote.

The electors cast their official vote on Dec. 14 with Biden defeating Trump by 306-232 Electoral College votes.

How Wednesday started

Wednesday's usually formal and sedate joint event of Congress was expected to be different, but not violent.

Vice President Mike Pence opened the proceedings with mahogany boxes of Electoral College votes from each state. When Arizona's 11 votes were opened, some Republicans mounted objections to votes from Arizona, the first of several states they said they would contest.

A daylong debate was expected, with no chance that the objections would succeed in attracting a majority in either chamber.

Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., had started live-tweeting the events in Congress, writing "Stop the Coup!"

"GOP Senators just officially objected to counting the votes in a state Trump lost with one goal: keeping Trump in power despite his election loss," Merkley wrote. "This is a direct assault on our We the People Constitution."

The tweet string went silent as protesters made their way up the stairs and into the Cap-



J. Scott Applewhite/AP

Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi talk before a joint session of the House and Senate had convened earlier Wednesday to count the Electoral College votes cast in November's election. But they were forced out of the Capitol before the pro-Trump mob broke through. Later Wednesday night, after returning, Pence told the Senate: "Let's get back to work."

itol shortly after the beginning of the debates in the House and Senate.

Merkley later held a press conference on the phone from a "secure" room he and others had been moved to at an undisclosed location.

He said Trump and his supporters pushing the objections in Congress were responsible for inciting a riot that put all the lawmakers, staff and law enforcement in danger.

"That's what we heard on the floor today — (that) we should listen to the mob. And that's why we should stop the election of Joe Biden," Merkley said. "It should never have

come to this," he said.

U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, who was sworn in as the new representative of Oregon's 2nd Congressional District just days earlier, had joined last month with fellow Republican representative-elects in a statement to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., calling for an investigation into the 2020 presidential election.

"I have joined many of my colleagues in asking for a congressional investigation and review into what has happened in states where election irregularities have been observed," the statement said.

A commission or some

other investigation into the election that would delay the Electoral College vote had been put forward by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and other leaders of the move to object to the official count.

Bentz has repeatedly declined to give a yes or no answer to the question of whether he would join in the objections.

Bentz was not on the floor when protesters broke into the House chamber. House members rotated to the floor because of COVID-19 distancing protocols.

Bentz said the objections to the Electoral College votes were going on "according to the rules" and that those backing the effort should have let it proceed.

"There's no reason to be breaking in and putting people in fear," Bentz said.

'Like a Third World country'

Oregon's four other House members are Democrats who supported the Electoral College result in Biden's favor.

U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton, said after being evacuated from the House side of the Capitol that she didn't think what was happening was possible in the United States.

"It's like a Third World country," Bonamici told The Oregonian in a phone call. "Someone has been shot in the Capitol. The Capitol windows

"There's no reason to be breaking in and putting people in fear."

— Cliff Bentz, the new Republican representative for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District

have been shot out. It's unbelievable."

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland also used Twitter to link Trump's unwillingness to accept the Biden win as the genesis for the attack on the heart of constitutional democracy in the nation.

"The people storming the U.S. Capitol building right now are domestic terrorists emboldened by Trump and every Republican who has spread lies about the results of the presidential election. This has to stop."

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield, told The Oregonian the attack on Congress was a "attempt to invalidate the election."

Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Salem, told the newspaper "it's pretty horrific" and said the "self-described patriots" were "terrorists."

But Schrader said Congress would get back to work as soon as it was safe and finish the vote to finalize the process leading to the Jan. 20 inauguration of Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

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