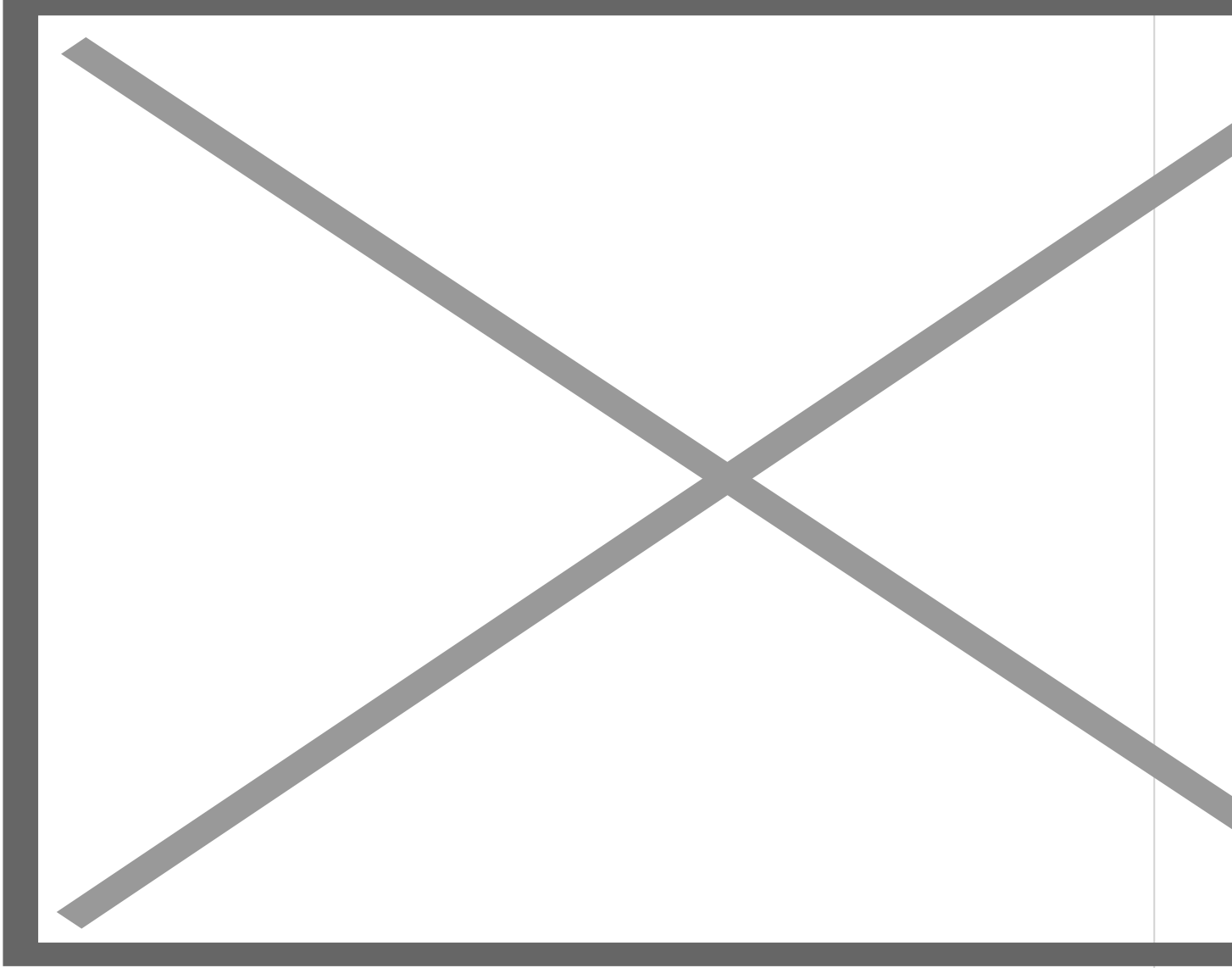


Poll reveals majority of Republicans buy false claims of U.S. Capitol riot

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Washington, April 5 (RHC)-- Since the deadly January 6th insurrection at the United States Capitol, former President Donald Trump and his Republican allies have pushed false and misleading accounts to downplay the event that left five dead and scores of others wounded. And, according to a new poll, his supporters appear to have listened.

Three months after a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol to try to overturn his November election loss, more than half of Republicans believe the siege was largely a non-violent protest or was the handiwork of left-wing activists "trying to make Trump look bad."

A new Reuters/Ipsos poll has found that six in 10 Republicans also believe the false claim put out by Trump that November's presidential election "was stolen" from him due to widespread voter fraud, and the same proportion of Republicans think he should run again in 2024, the March 30th and 31st poll showed.

Since the Capitol attack, Trump, many of his allies within the Republican Party and right-wing media personalities have publicly painted a picture of the day's events jarringly at odds with reality. Hundreds of Trump's supporters, mobilized by the former president's false claims of a stolen election, climbed walls of the Capitol building and smashed windows to gain entry while lawmakers were inside voting to certify President Joe Biden's election victory. The rioters -- many of them sporting Trump campaign gear and waving flags -- also included known white supremacist groups such as the Proud Boys.

In a recent interview with Fox News, Trump said the rioters posed "zero threat." Other prominent Republicans, such as Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, have publicly doubted whether Trump supporters were behind the riot.

Watchdog group Media Matters for America noted in a March 31 report that former Trump advisory board member Natalie Harp said the election was stolen on her debut episode of the One America News Network programme.

The riot left five dead, including one Capitol Police officer. Last month, 12 Republicans in the House of Representatives voted against a resolution honouring Capitol Police officers who defended the grounds during the rampage, with one lawmaker saying that he objected using the word "insurrection" to describe the incident.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll shows a large number of rank-and-file Republicans have embraced the myth. While 59 percent of all Americans say Trump bears some responsibility for the attack, only three in 10 Republicans agree. Eight in 10 Democrats and six in 10 independents reject the false claims that the Capitol siege was "mostly peaceful" or it was staged by left-wing protesters.

"Republicans have their own version of reality," John Geer, an expert on public opinion at Vanderbilt University, told Reuters. "It is a huge problem. Democracy requires accountability and accountability requires evidence."

The refusal of Trump and prominent Republicans to repudiate the events of January 6 increases the likelihood of a similar incident happening again, according to Susan Corke, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups.

"That is the biggest danger -- normalising this behaviour," Corke told Reuters. "I do think we are going to see more violence."

In a fresh reminder of the security threats the U.S. Capitol faces since January 6, a motorist rammed a car into two Capitol Police officers on Friday and brandished a knife, killing one officer and injuring another and forcing the Capitol complex to lock down. Officers shot and killed the suspect.

Allie Carroll, a spokeswoman for the Republican National Committee, said its members condemned the Capitol attack and referred to a January 13 statement from Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel. "Violence has no place in our politics ... Those who partook in the assault on our nation's Capitol and those who continue to threaten violence should be found, held accountable, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," McDaniel said.

A representative for Trump did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

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