

Trump pardons woman for storming the Capitol, but she refuses to leave jail

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Pamela Hemphill, 71, of Boise, Idaho, who served 60 days in prison, said it would be “an insult to the Capitol Police” if she accepted the pardon.

Washington, January 27 (RHC)-- Many of those convicted of storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, have celebrated the pardons or commutations that they received this week from President Trump.

Not Pamela Hemphill. A retired drug and alcohol counselor who lives in Boise, Idaho, she pleaded guilty in January 2022 to a misdemeanor offense for entering the Capitol during the riot and was sentenced to 60 days in prison and three years of probation.

She said she did not want a pardon. “Absolutely not,” Ms. Hemphill said in a recent interview. “It’s an insult to the Capitol Police, to the rule of law and to the nation. If I accept a pardon, I’m continuing their propaganda, their gaslighting and all their falsehoods they’re putting out there about Jan. 6.”

Ms. Hemphill, 71, who was called “MAGA Granny” in some news headlines, has said that she no longer supports Donald Trump or believes his lie that the 2020 election was stolen. She said that a therapist had helped change her view of the attack by telling her she was “not a victim of Jan. 6; I was a volunteer.”

“I lost my critical thinking,” she said, reflecting on her involvement in the riot and the “Stop the Steal” movement. “Now I know it was a cult, and I was in a cult.”

Her wish to reject the pardon was previously reported by The Idaho Statesman. Ms. Hemphill said she had spoken with a lawyer about spurning the grant of clemency but had not taken any legal action to do so. It is not clear that she can legally reject the pardon.

“It would be a novel act to file a court case to reject a pardon of a misdemeanor, in part because of the low stakes,” Mark Osler, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, said in an interview.

There is some legal precedent, however, suggesting that any such request could face an uphill battle. In December, two federal prisoners whose death sentences were commuted last year by President Biden asked a judge to block the reduction in their sentences, arguing that it could jeopardize their appeals. Judge James R. Sweeney II of U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana dismissed the prisoners’ requests last week, ruling that the prisoners could not reject their commutations, even if they did not ask for them or want them.

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