

# GOP Resistance to the Jan. 6 Hearings Is Looking Increasingly Silly



We're into week two of the January 6th Committee hearings, and we continue to hear revealing testimony and accounts that paint an increasingly damning picture of Donald Trump's extraordinary efforts, following his 2020 election loss, to remain in power and convince millions of Americans that their country's democracy had been stolen.

Unsurprisingly, the political left has been giving these findings maximum exposure, while the political right has largely framed them (and the committee itself) as simultaneously illegitimate, hyper-partisan, and irrelevant to the things Americans *really* care about.

I'm far from the first person to make this comparison, but it really does remind me of the Benghazi hearings... only in reverse.

The “illegitimacy” argument was used a lot by the Democrats back then. They claimed that there had already been plenty of investigations into the Benghazi attacks, and every question on the topic had already been satisfactorily answered and substantiated.

Their stance was effectively, “There’s nothing more to see here; it’s time to move on.”

It wasn’t true then, and it isn’t true now.

The charge that the January 6 Committee is “hyper-partisan”, which today’s Republicans have coupled closely with their *illegitimacy* argument, would actually seem to carry more weight (at least on paper) than when the Democrats evoked it years ago. After all, there were five House Democrats on the Republican-led Benghazi committee, making up roughly 40% of its seats (which is pretty decent representation). But on the Democratic-led January 6 Committee, only two of its nine members are Republicans. That’s barely over 20%.

However, the problem with that narrative, as I touched on in last week’s column, is that Republicans were given the opportunity to be part of a 50/50, 9/11-style, truly bipartisan January 6 commission (an opportunity they both asked and successfully negotiated for), and then decided to kill it when it came time to vote for its approval.

Next came the first iteration of the *select committee*, in which House Speaker Nancy Pelosi offered five of thirteen seats to the GOP; this was in addition to her already having selected Republican Liz Cheney for one seat, amounting to roughly the same party make-up as the Benghazi committee. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, like he did the first time, initially agreed to the terms. But when Pelosi rejected two of his picks, Jim Jordan and Jim Banks (both prominent participants in Trump’s “Stop the Steal” efforts), McCarthy pulled his other three Republicans and vowed not to appoint

any others. At that point, Pelosi decreased the size of the committee to nine, added Republican Adam Kinzinger (who accepted the role against McCarthy's wishes), and that's why the committee is so politically lopsided.

In other words, the GOP chose this.

Do Democrats hope the committee's findings will hurt the Republicans? Without doubt. But the same was true of Republicans when it came to Benghazi. That didn't mean the select committee on Benghazi shouldn't have happened. I certainly think it should have.

As for the notion that the efforts of the committee are detached from the top concerns of most Americans – especially kitchen-table issues like crushing inflation and gas prices, it's safe to say that's true. And that's why it's perhaps the right's worst argument, despite being parroted so often.

*Real America doesn't care about the January 6th Committee.*

*Gas is over \$5 per gallon!*

*– Rep. Jim Jordan (@Jim\_Jordan) June 16, 2022*

Think about it for a minute...

There are currently 535 members of the U.S. Congress. Only 9 of them have been serving on the January 6 Committee. And the work those nine have done has in no way kept them from voting on any legislation related to inflation or anything else at the top of Americans' list of concerns.

It's fine to slam Congress or a political party for not doing enough to deal with more immediate societal concerns, but to point a finger at a 9-person committee working on a separate issue, and pretending their work is somehow hampering action on other issues, is patently absurd.

I mean, if you follow the logic of Jim Jordan's tweet, the national debt (which he preached about all the time when he was still playing a fiscal hawk) also isn't worth any time or attention. After all, most Americans don't care about it, despite it arguably being the most predictable, consequential, and catastrophic threat our nation faces. So why take it seriously, right?

Wrong. It should be taken seriously, and so should a U.S. president trying to steal an election, selling millions of Americans on a devastating lie, and causing a deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Lastly, if the fear of the GOP is that the hearings will only serve to hurt their electoral prospects in the midterms, perhaps they should pay more attention to the polls. Most Republicans may not be able to bring themselves to kick the former president to the curb, but most Americans are more than willing to take their political frustrations out on the current guy (and his party).

As of the time I'm writing this, President Biden's approval rating is below 40% in the RCP average, and Republicans are leading the Democrats in the generic congressional vote by the same amount they did a month ago. The GOP will easily win back the House, and probably the Senate this year. And it's a near certainty that the inflation problem won't get significantly better before November, which is bad for the country, but good for the party out of power.

Besides that, a number of Republicans, including Mike Pence and his staff, are coming out of these hearings looking pretty darned good. Democrats on the committee have even publicly hailed Pence and company for their patriotism. Despite many on the right insisting that the committee's goal was to rake the entire GOP over the coals, that clearly hasn't been the case. Trump and other particularly egregious actors (like Rudy Giuliani, Sidney Powell, and John Eastman) are being

thoroughly exposed, but my guess is that there won't be a whole lot of time spent on run-of-the-mill "stop the steal" types in congress, beyond Liz Cheney calling out their dishonor last week.

*Fox News's* Brit Hume even argued the other day that the committee's efforts might ultimately do the Republican Party a "great service", because he thinks "a great many Republicans think they can't win with Trump at the head of the ticket again."

It's an interesting point, and if things play out that way, it would be impossible to miss the irony of Liz Cheney sacrificing her political career to finally free her party of the man who has caused it and the country such terrible institutional damage.