

Review

House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol. *Final Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol*. H.R. Rep. No. 117-663 (2022). <https://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo190110>

It's finally here—the January 6th report, or its full title, *Final Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the Capitol*. This report might not be what you expect: it focuses far more on the 2020 election and electoral law than the Wednesday in January 2021 when a mob of armed and angry citizens breached the Capitol building. The crux of the report, instead, is a meticulous compilation of activities by the Trump administration leading up to the 6th, involving memos, tweets, office politics, allegations of election fraud, and attempts to overturn the 2020 election results. Through its intense level of detail, extensive endnotes, and frequent appeals to bipartisanship, the report aims to demonstrate transparency in order to assure anyone who needs it of the integrity of the 2020 election.

This title—which, for brevity's sake, I will just call “the report”—is immense, coming in at 845 pages (for comparison, the 9/11 Commission report is 585 pages). Its collection on GovInfo even has additional content, like excerpts of videos of testimony. The executive summary lays out the select committee's argument that the 6th Capitol riot was the result of a deliberate, multi-pronged

plan by the Trump administration to overturn the 2020 election results. It starts with the “Big Lie,” as the report calls it, referring to allegations about the integrity of the election that the Trump administration and its allies spread. The executive summary painstakingly reviews cases where courts declared there was no evidence of fraud, quotes witnesses who testified that they told the President as much, and compiles a table comparing when Trump was informed that an allegation was false to a later date when he spread that disinformation anyway. Next, the summary covers the creation of false electoral slates that had been sent to the National Archives, as well as the pressure put on Mike Pence to refuse to certify the count of electoral votes at the joint session on January 6th. Again, in painstaking detail, the executive summary details why this strategy had no legal basis, based on the Electoral Count Act of 1887 and the 12th Amendment. Only after this do we arrive at the Ellipse speech, law enforcement's reaction, the “187 minutes” before Trump tweeted that rioters should disperse, and the committee's recommendations.

The subsequent eight chapters follow this same structure, supplying additional detail. Chapter 6, about the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers and how they joined forces, might be of particular interest to readers. Some sections are difficult to read—like the 9/11 Commission report, we revisit a democracy-redefining moment and accompany

people on one of the worst days of their lives—but reading other sections is like trying to keep up with high school gossip: who called whom what on the phone when which other people were in earshot (respectively: Trump, Pence, “the p-word,” Ivanka, and three others; see p. 457 for more). Some other valuable content, like intelligence gathering leading up to the 6th or the three-hour delay before sending in the National Guard, are relegated to appendixes.

What the ultimate legacy of the Capitol attack will be is uncertain. Still, the January 6th Final Report is the most thorough, most definitive account of what happened that day, from multiple perspectives: those in the Trump administration, those in the intelligence community, those who marched to (and on) the Capitol, and finally, those who were inside the building. The main weakness is that it is repetitive, reiterating its potentially inflammatory findings frequently: Trump knew better but did it anyway. This report does not mince words when it comes to the former president and his connections to election disinformation, conspiracy theorists, and militia groups. This report comes at a time when more books on our shelves are being challenged than ever before, so I leave that choice entirely to your discretion—after all, despite attempts to make it otherwise, it's a free country.—*Kelly Bilz (bilzk@thomasmore.edu), Reference & Government Documents Librarian, Thomas More University*