

January 6 Hearing Testimony

My name is Brendan Ballou. For two years I was on the team that prosecuted rioters who attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021. To be clear, I was a very small part of a very large team, but because I'm in a position to speak publicly, I will.

Let me start, not with January 6, but with January 20, 2025, when President Trump pardoned over 1,500 rioters. Now, here I confess my own ignorance: I believed that, if only out of pure political self-interest, President Trump would not pardon those rioters who attacked and tried to kill police officers. I was wrong. In fact, the President pardoned rioters who viciously attacked officers with deadly weapons, who dragged officers into the crowd, tased them, and tried to gouge out their eyes.¹ He even pardoned rioters who had previously been convicted of manslaughter and charged with production of child pornography,² and when his first pardon was insufficient, *re*-pardoned a defendant on an unrelated gun charge to set him free.³

After the pardons, I chose to resign from the Department of Justice.

President Trump has done far more to rewrite the history of January 6 than just the pardons. He has fired, demoted, and intimidated the FBI agents and career prosecutors—my former colleagues—who held to account those who broke the law on January 6th. He appointed an election denier, Ed Martin, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. He appointed a literal rioter, Jared Wise, to a senior position in the Justice Department. His appointees have tried to erase public records of the attack. And his DOJ has deliberately used many of the same charging statutes used against rioters against his political opponents: Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, for instance, and protesters in Los Angeles and DC (many of whose charges, I note, were reduced or dropped entirely⁴).

Why has the President continued to focus on erasing the history of January 6? I believe it's because he knows that if he can convince Americans to forget the attack on the Capitol, then he can convince us to accept any attack on democracy, no matter how violent. If that happens—if January 6 is forgotten or worse yet, seen as legitimate political discourse—we will lose our democracy.

So what can be done? To start, we have to preserve our past. Memorials like this event matter. So too do symbols. As you have noted, in 2022, Congress passed a law to install a plaque to honor the officers who defended the Capitol that day, and required that it be installed within one year. That deadline was nearly three years ago, and though a plaque has been made, the Speaker of the House refuses to install it. Two officers, Harry Dunn and Daniel Hodges—both of whom protected the Capitol that day—have sued to have the memorial installed, and we will soon see if the Speaker and his subordinate offices will be compelled to follow the law.

But we can do much more than lawsuits. For people who want to honor the memory of January 6, there is much you can do. Keep talking about it. Keep writing about it. Develop school curricula. Archive the history of the attack. Have your local government annually memorialize the history of the day. The fight over the past is a fight over the future, and in a

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/people-are-violent-jan-6-rioters-trump-pardoned-rcna188545>

² <https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/118126/documents/HHRG-119-JU01-20250409-SD004-U4.pdf>

³ <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/15/trump-re-pardons-a-jan-6-defendant-to-erase-unrelated-gun-conviction-five-year-jail-term-00653425>

⁴ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/national-international/doj-charges-protesters-immigration-crackdown-prosecution-fail-court/4031331/>

world where so many politicians' political careers depend on forgetting, memory itself is an act of resistance.