

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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Ranking Member Jamie Raskin Committee on Oversight and Accountability Opening Statement “A Legacy of Incompetence: Consequences of the Biden-Harris Administration’s Policy Failures” September 19, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Comer, and thanks to the witnesses for joining us today from one of the Committee’s last hearings in the 118th Congress with the extremely fitting title of “A Legacy of Incompetence.”

The majority has assembled a group of leading Project 2025 intellectuals for a Project 2025 coming out party today. The witnesses will advertise their wares, which almost makes me a bit nostalgic, Mr. Chairman, for the days when our colleagues said that they were pursuing President Joe Biden for “the worst presidential crime in American history,” a crime which unfortunately they were never able to identify, but which they now appear to have dropped completely.

Last week, my Democratic colleagues and I urged Chairman Comer to hold a hearing on a real issue, on the gun violence epidemic that is ravaging America. This Congress, our GOP colleagues have refused to hold a single hearing about a single mass shooting—except for the one that involved a former President Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania. The security of the former president is absolutely critical, but doesn’t the rest of the country count too? Who’s gonna keep the rest of America safe from AR-15 attacks by disturbed people loaded up on hate and conspiracy theory? Don’t all Americans deserve to live free of gun violence?

There have been more than 1,000 mass shootings, defined as at least four people being shot, that have claimed more than 1,000 lives since the start of this Congress. Just since the mass-shooting and assassination attempt on the ex-president on July 13, there have been more than 100 more mass shootings that have claimed 88 more American lives. There were four other Americans who died *that day* on July 13th after the attack in Butler, and yet we’re told by JD Vance that gun violence is “a fact of life” in America. C’est la vie, nothing can be done about it.

Of course, it’s not a fact of life in England or France or Ireland or Canada or Japan or dozens of other countries. The NRA, the GOP, and the terribly weak Swiss cheese gun laws they insist upon have made gun violence a fact of death in America because they refused to discuss the policy solutions favored by the vast majority of the American people of all parties: a universal violent criminal background check, red flag laws, a ban on the sale of AR-15s and other military-style assault weapons. So, we have a rate of gun homicide 25 times higher than people living in Europe, and gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children and teenagers in the United States of America.

Instead of holding a hearing on gun violence, Chairman Comer has convened a panel of four witnesses with deep ties to Project 2025, the MAGA Manifesto for a second Trump Administration, so they can jockey for Mr. Trump's approval and land a spot on his Cabinet or sub-Cabinet, a fate not necessarily to be envied if you talk to former Vice President Mike Pence, Trump's former defense Secretary Mark Esper, his former National Security Adviser John Bolton, Cassidy Hutchinson, or more than 100 other former Republicans declaring him completely unfit for office.

But here we are with these Project 2025 luminaries who've taken up the challenge to set forth the agenda on how to take America backwards in every domain of public life.

A recently disclosed email from Steven Bradbury, one of Project 2025's leaders and Trump's former Secretary of Transportation, says that, "those who show real commitment and valuable contributions will be recognized by the leaders of the project, whose recommendations are likely to carry influence" with the key personnel decision-makers.

And today, two of our witnesses, Mr. Carr and Ms. Gunasekara showed just that "real commitment" by authoring chapters of Project 2025. Press reports say Mr. Carr is vying to be Mr. Trump's FCC Chairman while Ms. Gunasekara apparently has her eye on being Mr. Trump's next EPA Administrator. I will stand corrected if you guys disclaim any ambitions for those offices, but that's what the press is reporting. And the Majority's other two witnesses also come to us from organizations right there on the Advisory Board of Project 2025.

So, we'll hear from them and we'll discuss how they intend to implement the extremist Project 2025 gameplan in a hypothetical second administration for Donald Trump. It's a program that depends on sending in an army of Trump sycophants to replace 50,000 professional civil servants. It's a program subordinating the people's government to big corporations, and it tramples the rights of women to abortion, birth control and IVF, which the Republicans just voted against yesterday.

It is a plan to upend democratic government as we know it in America: It involves:

- Politicizing the federal workforce and gutting the civil service
- Weaponizing the Department of Justice against political rivals and the people
- Seizing political control of independent agencies like the Federal Reserve and the FCC
- Eliminating overtime pay for millions of workers
- Denying the climate crisis and pulling the plug on environmental progress
- Ending reproductive freedom in every state
- Federally surveilling births and abortions
- Legalizing discrimination against LGBTQI+ Americans
- Organizing mass deportations and detention camps
- Deploying the military to quash free speech and protests
- Eliminating Head Start and the Department of Education
- Dismantling NOAA and privatizing the National Weather Service
- Limiting benefits for veterans

Donald Trump has half-heartedly tried to distance himself from this toxic and increasingly unpopular agenda. But you need only turn to the table of contents of this big book to realize it is the total product of Trump's inner circle.

This MAGA Manifesto has 37 authors and contributors. Of those, 31 served in the Trump Administration—80%. Donald Trump has turned dodgy about his connection to Project 2025 despite the fact that he has praised it and commended its authors, because he knows it is way too extreme for the vast majority of the American people.

The Biden-Harris Administration has restored America's place as a global leader and led an economic recovery that is the envy of the rest of the world. Project 2025 wants to reverse all the progress we've made, strip Americans of basic fundamental rights and freedoms that we've had for decades, and create a federal workforce loyal only to Donald Trump and not to the Constitution of the United States.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we're going to try to get to the details from these Project 2025 experts that you have kindly assembled for us. Let's get specific today and let's see if the American people really want to follow the dark vision for America that Project 2025 has set forth.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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