



BATTLEGROUND DEMOCRACY

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Fair Fight
RE: BATTLEGROUND DEMOCRACY TIP MEMO:
Republican Attacks on Democracy Turn to Legislative Expulsions, Censures, and Takeovers

A year before the 2024 elections, GOP-led state legislatures are working overtime to rig the rules and results in their favor. In recent months, GOP-led legislatures have expelled, censured, and taken other actions to silence, remove, and suppress legislators and democratically-elected officials across the country. These actions, which have disproportionately targeted Black and queer electeds, represent a disturbing new frontier of the GOP's assault on democracy. These tactics draw on those used by white supremacists post-Reconstruction, relying on state power to suppress and intimidate dissenting legislators and silence the communities they represent.

The GOP is now brazenly echoing centuries-old white supremacy tactics because they have realized that voters' voices, dissent, and real democracy are not the path to maintaining their stranglehold on positions of power. These strategies are an necrotic outgrowth of the Big Lie, and allows the GOP to hone their efforts to silence voters particularly on Black, brown, young, and LGBTQ+ voices, who continue to show up in record numbers.

The GOP is committed to silencing voters through election subversion, gerrymandering, and voter suppression tactics and further ensuring that voters do not have a voice by supporting GOP-led legislatures from Montana to Tennessee when they engage in this practice of forcibly removing or censoring the legislators those voters elect.

- In **Tennessee**, GOP lawmakers [voted to expel](#) Reps Justin Pearson and Jones (D), who are both Black, for their role in a protest at the state capitol calling for expanded gun control measures. Rep Gloria Johnson, who is white, survived the vote on her expulsion.
- In **Oklahoma**, GOP lawmakers [formally censured Rep Mauree Turner \(D\)](#), the first openly nonbinary and Muslim person elected to the state legislature, after state troopers claimed Turner blocked them from questioning a transgender rights activist accused of assaulting a police officer during a protest. Turner will be removed from all committee assignments unless they issue a formal apology.
- In **Montana**, GOP lawmakers [voted to bar](#) Rep Zoey Zephyr (D), the first openly transgender woman elected to the state legislature, from being on the House floor, anteroom, or gallery for the rest of the legislative session after she lifted her microphone towards protestors. Zephyr will be allowed to vote; however, she can only do so remotely, meaning she cannot debate on the floor to share her opinions or concerns about legislation.



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- In **Georgia**, the GOP legislature [has passed](#) repeated legislation to remove Black members of county boards of elections and [passed legislation](#) to facilitate the removal of progressive District Attorneys.
- In **Texas**, the GOP led legislature [voted to take over](#) the Houston school district, an extension of GOP attacks on honest education curriculum. It is the largest school district in Texas, and is predominantly Latino and/or Black.
- In **Mississippi**, the white GOP-led legislature [spearheaded](#) the legislative takeover of the city of Jackson, which is Black-led and majority Black, replacing it with a state-controlled court system and police force.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This most recent pattern of attacks by Republicans is built on the foundation of white supremacy, harkening back to post-Reconstruction attacks on Black legislators and expulsions by segregationist legislatures. In September 1868, the Georgia legislature [expelled](#) the “Original 33,” the first Black legislators elected to the state legislature. This pattern also occurred in Mississippi, which systematically purged Black elected officials, and went so far as to [attempt to evict](#) the entire Black population, and held across the South.

As federal intervention, integration, and courts made more blatant expulsions and racist laws less efficient, state legislatures began to use literacy tests, poll taxes, and Jim Crow laws to purge Black voters; post-Voting Rights Act, these tactics shifted to even more administrative methods, like gerrymandering, polling place consolidation, and ID laws. However, they did not erase purges: in January 1966, nearly a century after the Original 33, the Georgia House [refused to seat](#) civil rights activist Julian Bond due to his opposition to the Vietnam War.

THE PATH AHEAD

All of this is happening against the backdrop of the upcoming 2024 elections, where the far-right GOP is preparing to disrupt elections administration with anti-democratic and anti-voter legislation, challenges to voters and to election results, and openly lauding their intentions to target Black, Hispanic, and young voters as a means of suppressing the vote and creating the conditions necessary for Republicans to get the most votes from the suppressed electorate.

It is no accident that this is happening as voters are showing up in record-breaking numbers, and the electorate is becoming more diverse. The GOP knows what this means for their chances of winning democratically, and so is using every tool at their disposal to try to hold on to power through white minority rule — not only to silence voters’ voices and erode the freedom to vote, but even more explicitly but to try to intimidate voters and legislators alike to stop them from showing up and speaking out about the issues they care about in the future.



This pattern of attacks by extreme Republicans is built on the foundation of white supremacy, harkening back to post-Reconstruction attacks on Black legislators and expulsions by segregationist legislatures. It is built on anti-voting and anti-democratic foundations, foundations that include a history of poll taxes, literacy tests, and Jim Crow laws.

As 2024 approaches, we must see these reprehensible tactics for what they are – an attempt to silence our voices, subvert our will, and undermine our freedom to vote. These last-ditch power grabs cannot be permitted to succeed; we must stand together, and ensure that our voices are heard.