

# January 6 rioters: Trump plans to issue pardons for some convicted

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Supporters of then-President Donald Trump gather in front of the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC, on January 6, 2021.

Stephanie Keith/Reuters/File  
CNN —

President-elect Donald Trump and his team have drafted a slate of pardons for people convicted for their role in the January 6 Capitol attack to be issued on Day 1, shortly after Trump is sworn in as president, two sources familiar with the plans told CNN.

Trump has repeatedly said he planned to swiftly pardon people who were convicted for their role in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol. During a December interview with Time Magazine, Trump said: "I'll be looking at J6 early on, maybe the first nine minutes."

The extent of the initial pardons is still unclear; however, one of the sources described them as enough to be seen as "delivering on his long-held promise." About 1,270 people have been convicted of January 6-related crimes, and the vast majority of those defendants pleaded guilty. Only a couple hundred are currently behind bars.

Vice President-elect JD Vance said in an interview last week that rioters accused of violence shouldn't be pardoned, while also arguing there was a "bit of a gray area" in some cases.

Several Republican allies of Trump have said they expect him to approach the pardons on a case-by-case basis, but two key GOP lawmakers on Sunday refused to rule out Trump potentially issuing pardons for some of the roughly 174 defendants charged with using a deadly or dangerous weapon against police officers.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said Sunday on "Meet the Press" that Trump and Vance agree "peaceful protesters should be pardoned, but violent criminals should not."

Pressed by NBC's Kristen Welker, whom Trump told last month that he was looking at every January 6 case and not ruling anything out when it came to pardons, Johnson refused to say whether rioters accused of attacking police officers should be pardoned, responding "every case needs to be evaluated."

"What President Trump is getting at is the lack of faith that people have right now in our system of justice. It was abused for the last few years, under the last four years on the Biden administration, the Department of Justice itself was weaponized when the people lose their faith in our system of justice," said Johnson. "That is what leads to all these other concerns, and President Trump's going to restore that we're going to have new leadership"

The federal government's efforts to prosecute January 6 rioters began in the immediate aftermath of the 2021 riot, under the Trump administration and with Trump appointees at the helm of the Justice Department and FBI. One day after the insurrection, Trump said, "to those who broke the law, you will pay," and later vowed that "those who engaged in the attacks last week will be brought to justice."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan, who repeatedly pushed false stolen election rhetoric in the lead-up to January 6 and voted against certifying the 2020 election results, told CNN's Dana Bash on Sunday that he agrees with Vance that the cases of those accused of violence shouldn't be viewed the same as others who did not inflict the same kind of damage.

"I think that's where the American people are. I think that's where the President is," Jordan said on "State of the Union," adding that Trump should go "case by case" through the rioters when Bash pressed him about those accused of violence.

Jordan said he believes those accused of violent acts against police officers at the Capitol "maybe shouldn't be pardoned."

“It’s a power solely with the president, case by case, person by person, and the President has complete authority to pardon who he wants to pardon,” Jordan said. “But I think he’s going to focus on those ... all the people who didn’t commit any violence.”

Asked again by Bash whether he believes it’s OK for even one of the people accused of violence against police officers to be pardoned by the incoming president, Jordan responded, “That’s up to the president.”

Jordan added that Trump, along with his legal counsel and Justice Department advisers, would “look at all the facts, but then he will make the decision. And that’s how it works in America. It’s a power that is exclusively with the president of the United States.”

Nearly 1,600 people have been charged in connection with the January 6 riot, including about 700 with serious felony offenses like assaulting police or using a weapon. About 80% of all cases have already resulted in guilty pleas or trial convictions, and a couple hundred defendants are currently in prison, according to the latest Justice Department estimates.

Since his election victory in November, Trump has faced pressure from January 6 support groups and family members of convicted rioters to grant maximum clemency — by pardoning everyone ever charged, including those convicted of assaulting police or seditious conspiracy. More targeted pardons for only nonviolent offenders, as signaled by Vance and the GOP lawmakers, could anger these groups that are part of his right-wing base and have staunchly stood by Trump over the past four years.

More than 140 police officers were injured during the seven-hour siege, which also led directly and indirectly to the deaths of four Trump supporters in the mob and five police officers. The attack caused about \$2.8 million in damages to the Capitol building and grounds.

Some rioters charged or convicted in the Capitol attack are returning to Washington, DC, Trump’s inauguration, CNN previously reported. But some federal judges also recently blocked a handful of other January 6 defendants from attending the inauguration, agreeing with Justice Department prosecutors who argued that letting the rioters “return to the scene of the crime” could put police officers in danger.

Pardons don’t erase a defendant’s criminal record, and they don’t overturn a conviction. But a pardon forgives the offense and restores the recipient’s civil rights, such as gun ownership and voting rights.

CNN’s Morgan Rimmer contributed to this report.