



# LAWMAKERS SEEK TO BAR INSURRECTIONISTS FROM HOLDING OFFICE - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Democratic lawmakers in a handful of states are trying to send a message two years after the violent attack on the U.S. Capitol: Those who engage in an attempted overthrow of the government shouldn't be allowed to run it.

New York, Connecticut and Virginia are among states where proposed legislation would prohibit anyone convicted of participating in an insurrection from holding public office or a position of public trust, such as becoming a police officer.

While the bills vary in scope, their aim is similar.

"If you've tried to take down our government through violent means, in no way should you be part of it," New York state Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal said.

He is sponsoring a bill that would bar people convicted of engaging in an insurrection or rebellion against the United States from holding civil office, meaning they would not be able to serve as a judge or member of the Legislature. Hoylman-Sigal said he introduced the bill this year because he saw more people who were involved in the riot in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, running for office last year.

He described the assault on the Capitol as "a real attack on the foundations of our free and fair democracy and the values which enable that to persist."

A Virginia lawmaker introduced a bill this month, on the second anniversary of the Capitol riot, that would prohibit anyone convicted of a felony related to an attempted insurrection or riot from serving in positions of public trust — including those involving policymaking, law enforcement, safety, education or health.

A Connecticut bill would prohibit people convicted of sedition, rebellion, insurrection or a felony related to one of those acts from running for or holding public office. Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, who introduced the measure, told The Associated Press that he wants the legislation eventually to bar them from holding state or municipal jobs.

The legislation in the states comes after the House Jan. 6 committee's final report, which found Donald Trump criminally engaged in a conspiracy to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 presidential election he lost and failed to take action to stop his supporters from attacking the Capitol.

The committee's recently concluded work may have provided another springboard for lawmakers to act and propose ways to hold people accountable, said Victoria Bassetti, a senior policy adviser at States United Democracy Center, a nonpartisan organization that advocates for fair elections.



Some Republicans say the legislation is unnecessary.

In New York, Republican Assemblyman Will Barclay, the minority leader, called the bill there a "political statement," saying it is "more political than it is a concern about public policy."

He said existing rules already apply to people in certain positions who are convicted of crimes and that those laws "should be sufficient."

The legislation is another example of how the Capitol riot has become a political Rorschach test in the country.

Many Republicans refuse to see the attempt to violently halt the presidential certification — which was based on lies that 2020 election was stolen — as an insurrection, while a strong majority of the party continues to believe that President Joe Biden was not legitimately elected. Even students are being taught different versions of the attack, depending on whether they live in more conservative or liberal parts of the nation.

The opposing realities came into sharp focus this month in Pennsylvania during a fraught exchange between two lawmakers.

In a committee hearing, Republican state Sen. Cris Dush slammed his gavel as he ruled Democratic state Sen. Amanda Cappelletti out of order after she described the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as "the site of an insurrection."

"Insurrection, nobody has been charged with that," Dush said. "There's not been a single charge against any of those people as insurrectionists. In this committee, we are not using that term."

Nearly 1,000 people have been charged in the Capitol riot with federal crimes, with about half of them pleading guilty to riot-related charges and more than three dozen convicted at trial. The charges range from misdemeanors for those accused of entering the Capitol illegally but not participating in violence to felony seditious conspiracy for far-right extremist group members accused of plotting to stop the transfer of presidential power.

In November, two leaders of the Oath Keepers extremist group were convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors alleged was a weekslong plot to use force to keep Trump in office. Leaders of the Proud Boys and additional members of the Oath Keepers are currently standing trial on the sedition charge, which carries up to 20 years behind bars.

Weeks after the committee exchange, Cappelletti told The Associated Press that it's important to make sure people understand that the attack on the Capitol was an insurrection.

"These are factually correct things," she said. "That doesn't mean that we can't disagree politically about policy or other things, but we can acknowledge that that happened and start to figure out how we move forward to work together to build up that public trust again."

Dush remained steadfast in his view that what unfolded on Jan. 6 was not an insurrection.

"If there had been some sort of plot for an insurrection, that would've come apart quite quickly after the government got the control back," he said in a phone interview.

There have been some earlier attempts to prevent certain officials from either running for or holding office.

A New Hampshire bill that would have barred anyone who participates in an insurrection or rebellion from holding office in the state died

last year.



Also last year, groups brought lawsuits under a rarely cited section of the 14th Amendment dealing with insurrection. They sought to disqualify a handful of U.S. House members from seeking reelection for events surrounding the Jan. 6 riot.

In New Mexico, a state court in September disqualified a rural county commissioner from holding public office for engaging in the Capitol insurrection. Couy Griffin had been previously convicted in federal court of a misdemeanor for entering the Capitol grounds, without going inside the building. He was sentenced to 14 days and given credit for time served.

The judge permanently barred Griffin, who was then an elected commissioner from Otero County, from federal and local public office.

In West Virginia, a former state lawmaker who pleaded guilty to a felony — civil disorder — for participating in the riot and who served time, announced earlier this month that he was running for Congress.

"We have to really rid ourselves of those who would take down our government," said Duff, the Connecticut lawmaker. "There's no place for any of them to be (in) any kind of elected or appointed officer."

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