

SHIRKEY AND CHATFIELD: NO ONE ELSE WAS IN THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENED

Yesterday, Michigan certified its vote, declaring Joe Biden the winner of its 16 Electoral College votes.

That should not be surprising. After all, Biden won by a sound margin, and there were no credible claims of irregularities. Nevertheless it was treated as big news, with tens of thousands glued to the live feed of the certification meeting.

After the certification, per AP's David Eggert, the Dick and Betsy DeVos backed Michigan Freedom Fund issued a statement backing the certification.

The Board of State Canvassers did the right thing today. We believe the vote to certify should have been 4-0. The election is over, & the person with the most legal votes – & in this election that person is Joe Biden – must prevail. Period.

Not long after the certification, Trump's GSA Administrator, Emily Murphy, released a letter announcing she was going to let the President-Elect begin the transition process, even while she bitched about the pressure she had been put under and stopped short of using the word, "ascertainment," that gives the letter full legal weight.

I wonder whether there's not more to how it happened that Trump began the process of conceding.

All this happened just days after DeVos machine politicians Mike Shirkey and Lee Chatfield flew to DC and sat for a meeting with the President,

at his request. It's not clear who, from the White House, attended, but none of Trump's competent lawyers were planning on it.

Within the White House, a number of the president's top aides were expected to skip the late-afternoon huddle, including representatives from the White House Counsel's Office. Also not attending was Ronna McDaniel, a former head of the Michigan Republican Party who chairs the Republican National Committee, according to an RNC spokesperson.

Already in the post-election period, Trump had the GOP Republican Senate candidates and Lindsey Graham pressure election officials in Georgia, in Lindsey's case, arguably aggressively enough to break the law. The meeting with MI's legislators came at an even more desperate moment for Trump.

After the meeting, the MI politicians released a statement offering an explanation of their own actions that would provide legal cover – they delivered a letter asking the President for COVID relief. More interestingly, they insisted that MI's vote be free of threats and intimidation.

Michigan's certification process should be a deliberate process free from threats and intimidation. Allegations of fraudulent behavior should be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated, and if proven, prosecuted to the full extent of the law. And the candidates who win the most votes win elections and Michigan's electoral votes. These are simple truths that should provide confidence in our elections.

If Trump *did* do something inappropriate in that meeting – as he has done over and over and over before and during his presidency – it would mean

multiple people, all with close ties to the DeVos political machine, were witnesses. Given how easy it has been for grifters like Lev Parnas to record sensitive meetings, it would be a cinch for these politicians to do so as well. If they did, that would put a good deal of leverage into the hands of that DeVos machine, a machine that prefers *organized* raping and pillaging of the public good to the kind of chaotic looting Trump has been pursuing.

The DeVos machine would greatly like to ensure that its brand of corporatist, Christian ideology reclaim dominance in the Republican party over the unreliable Trump frothers.

Given how poorly Trump has hidden his bribes and threats in the past, it would be fairly easy to anticipate more of the same, and to exploit them if they happened during an in-person meeting with more witnesses from Michigan than from the White House. One could do so while pretending to give a fuck about good governance (as Shirkey et al did pretend after they left the meeting). And legal exposure in the State of Michigan, with a fearless Democratic Attorney General, Dana Nessel, is not the kind of risk that Trump has any power over.

Something happened over the last several days that led Trump to grudgingly start ceding power. And no one else was in the room where that something may have happened.

Update: Eggert has a thread reporting out an interview with Shirkey. In it, Shirkey claims that “only half” of the meeting talked about the election.

Shirkey estimated that in the 60- to 90-minute meeting with Trump, ‘less than half’ was devoted to discussions on the election – ‘especially if you take out the dialogue we had with Giuliani, it was far less than that.’

“Less than half” doesn’t really help Trump here.