

REPUBLICANS GET TO CHEW ON MATT GAETZ FOR TWO MONTHS AND A WEEK

Since Jack Smith conveyed that he was going to shut down, I've been pondering how to improve Democratic messaging enough such that when Smith issues his report, it would make clear to Republicans, especially Mitch McConnell (and now John Thune, his chosen successor who was chosen today), they would own Trump's crimes going forward. Similarly, I've been trying to anticipate how to convey the sheer outrage of the pardons Trump will issue when he becomes President.

I didn't and don't have great expectations that Democrats will be up to the task.

But then, after appointing a Fox TV pundit to run the largest military in the world, Trump picked Tulsi Gabbard to run the biggest intelligence operation, and then picked Matt Gaetz to run DOJ.

Thus far I've heard just a few Republicans (Lindsey Graham, Tommy Tuberville, Anna Paulina Luna), in either chamber, suggest Gaetz should be confirmed. Everyone else, especially Senators, are saying, welp, let's have a thorough confirmation process. Some are nodding towards the clearance process they still imagine Trump would adhere to. Elsewhere, Ed Whelan is spreading rumors that Trump simply intends to recess Congress and appoint his cabinet that way.

It's a frenzy. And it's a frenzy *led* by Republicans – though Democrats are definitely joining the fun. A frenzy that has already led to a flood of new details about Gaetz' debauchery.

If Gaetz gets this job via some means, it'll be

horrible. But it would probably be less horrible than if Mark Paoletta got the job, because Paoletta is highly competent, bureaucratically and legally, and personally close to Clarence Thomas and Sammy Alito. If you're going to have a guy trying to thoroughly weaponize DOJ, I'd much rather have the guy who'll piss off judges and natural Trump allies in the process.

Now, maybe this will burn through quickly and Trump will replace Gaetz with Paoletta. But if not, Gaetz serves as a ready symbol *whom most Republicans loathe* of all the same fitness problems that Trump has, of the same reasons why rule of law matters.

Trump is sprinting to bring the US down – and his nominations, and the means he might take to install his nominees, make that more clear.

Yes. It's horrible. Everything is horrible. But this Gaetz nomination (along with the other two) may finally convince people that Trump really is the menace to America that Democrats and never-Trumpers have been warning he was. There may be no better person than Gaetz to convince the Republicans who hate him how poor Trump's judgment is.

Update: After reporting that the Ethics Committee was going to vote *on Friday* to release their report on Gaetz (which is one of two reasons he quit), Dick Durbin called on the committee to preserve and share the report. John Cornyn also said he'd like to review it.