



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
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Legislation Text

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Motion of the Council of Allegheny County strongly encouraging visitPittsburgh to withdraw its bid to host the 2024 Republican National Convention, and expressing the sense of Council regarding such hosting.

Whereas, every four years, the two major political parties within the United States hold national conventions which are attended by a large number of delegates and other guests; and

Whereas, according to published reports (Varine, Patrick, “*Report: Pittsburgh on short-list for potential 2024 Republican National Convention sites*,” Pittsburgh Tribune Review, January 7, 2022) the City of Pittsburgh is among four cities under consideration for selection as the site of the 2024 Republican National Convention; and

Whereas, in 2020, the Republican National Convention was scheduled to be held at the Spectrum Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, but on June 2, 2020, former President Donald Trump and the Republican National Committee opted to remove the event from Charlotte after the North Carolina state government declined to agree to Trump's demands to allow the convention to take place with a full crowd and without public health measures designed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as social distancing and face coverings (Anderson, Bryan; Robertson, Gary D.; Colvin, Jill, “*Trump says GOP is pulling convention from North Carolina*,” Associated Press, June 2, 2020); and

Whereas, after ostensibly cancelling the Convention’s activities in Charlotte, former President Trump then announced that the convention would be moved to Jacksonville, Florida, then within weeks cancelled the Jacksonville convention plans on July 23, 2020 (Haberman, Maggie; Mazzei, Patricia; Karni, Annie, “*Trump Abruptly Cancels Republican Convention in Florida: 'It's Not the Right Time'*,” The New York Times, July 23, 2020).

Whereas, in the wake of this chaos, some of the 2020 Republican National Convention proceedings, significantly reduced in scale due to North Carolina’s safety requirements, were still held in Charlotte, and the party held the rest of the events and festivities remotely from various locations including Fort McHenry and the White House (Diamond, Jeremy; Nobles, Ryan, “*GOP convention in Charlotte closed to press, portions will be livestreamed*,” CNN August 1, 2020) and (Grynbaum, Michael M.; Karni, Annie; “*Republicans Rush to Finalize Convention ('Apprentice' Producers Are Helping)*,” The New York Times, August 22, 2020); and

Whereas, for the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland, OH (the most recent such event not impacted by COVID-19 safety measures), published reports include estimates that, in addition to the 2,472 delegates in attendance, 18,349 individuals traveled to Cleveland for protests and other “special events” related to the Convention, 15,000 members of the media were in attendance, there were 86 entries (including tennis balls, grappling hooks, containers filled with bodily fluids, drones, and lightbulbs) on a list of items prohibited in sites for Convention activities, and “thousands” of law enforcement officers were on duty (McCarthy, Tom, “*The Republican national convention in numbers: more than just one man*,” The Guardian, July 18, 2016); and

Whereas, according to that same report, the City of Cleveland’s police force numbered approximately 1,550 officers at the time of the convention; and

Whereas, according to the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police’s website (www.pittsburghpa.gov/police/), the City currently employs “approximately 900 sworn law enforcement officers;” and

Whereas, according to visitPittsburgh President and CEO Jerad Bechar, an event like the Republican National Convention would require over 16,000 of the City’s 18,300 hotel rooms (Varine, Patrick, “*Report: Pittsburgh on short-list for potential 2024 Republican National Convention sites*,” Pittsburgh Tribune Review, January 7, 2022); and

Whereas, as recently summarized, “[a] bombshell Senate report published Thursday details the lengths to which former President Donald Trump went in order to, first, sow doubt about the impending 2020 presidential election, and then, overturn the results in the aftermath of his loss. Of the most substantial revelations is the report's claim that the flailing president made a plan to install a loyalist as acting attorney general to pursue baseless reports of election fraud - a plan that saw top Justice Department officials threaten to resign en masse days before the inauguration, according to the report. The then-president's efforts to ensure he remained in power began long before a mob of his supporters attacked the Capitol on January 6, and were bubbling beneath the surface before the November election was even held.” (Snodgrass, Erin and Harrington, Rebecca; “*A timeline of Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election*,” Business Insider, October 7, 2021); and

Whereas, a timeline of events compiled by the authors of that same report is attached to this Motion; and

Whereas, while the complete United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary report, entitled “Subverting Justice: How the Former President and His Allies Pressured DOJ to Overturn the 2020 Election” is 394 pages long and is available in its entirety at <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Interim%20Staff%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>, Appendix A from that document (entitled “Chronology of Key Events”) is attached to this Motion; and

Whereas, this Senate report (and Appendix A thereto) detail extensive activities undertaken by the former administration to undermine the electoral process, both nationally and specifically within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

Whereas, according to Department of Justice statistics, as of January 6, 2022, over 700 individuals have been charged with criminal acts, while 174 have pled guilty and 74 have been sentenced in connection with the January 6 insurrection; and

Whereas, according to the Allegheny County Department of Health, as of January 15, 2022, COVID-19 has infected 228,528 Allegheny County residents (with 45,785 new infections in the first two weeks of January of 2022 alone), has hospitalized over 11,000 County residents, and has killed 2,763 County residents; and

Pursuant to the facts adduced above, the Council of Allegheny County finds that:

The chaos surrounding the 2020 Republican National Convention siting and activities (and its ultimate haphazard resolution) clearly demonstrate that any representations about potential economic or other benefits to the Pittsburgh region cannot be taken as factually accurate or reliable; and

It is overly simplistic and disingenuous to evaluate economic or other potential benefits to the City of Pittsburgh or Allegheny County in a vacuum, and those impacts must instead be considered against the

expenses associated with ensuring public safety, accommodating a large number of individuals who are unfamiliar with traffic patterns and local laws and regulations within the City of Pittsburgh, increased foot and auto traffic control demands, the potential deleterious impact of unfavorable publicity should events spiral into unrest or violence, and other factors; and

Because it is impossible to predict the timing or impact of future mutations of the COVID-19 virus, there is no way to guarantee the safety of individuals attending an event like a national convention from the disease; and

Because most national convention activities take place indoors and necessarily involve many individuals from disparate parts of the country that have varying rates of COVID positivity, the risk of a national convention becoming a superspreader event is comparatively high; and

Should the attendance for the 2024 Republican National Convention approach that of the 2016 Cleveland event, the City of Pittsburgh does not have the capacity to ensure public safety without assistance, and would therefore be forced to rely heavily upon other agencies for assistance, diverting a large number of resources in the process; and

The demonstrated recent history of certain factions within the Republican Party clearly and unambiguously demonstrates that these factions have tacitly condoned (if not outright incited) violent civil unrest and criminal activity undertaken by individuals traveling to a destination from across the country as a means of achieving political goals, as demonstrated by the violent attack on the United States Capitol just one year ago; and

The invitation of thousands of individuals to Allegheny County, without any ability to screen them in advance to ascertain whether they pose an elevated risk of violent or otherwise illegal activity poses a clear and present danger to the safety of the general public; and

Based upon recent events, this risk may be particularly elevated for any individuals who work within the numerous Federal, Commonwealth, County and City offices located within the downtown area of the City of Pittsburgh; and

While the freedom of speech is guaranteed (within certain limits) by the United States and Commonwealth Constitutions and it is not the intent or desire of Council to forbid the 2024 Republican National Convention from taking place within the boundaries of Allegheny County, it is the sense of Council that individuals and/or institutions that have aggressively (and in some documented cases fraudulently and/or violently) attempted to undermine the electoral process in the United States - and specifically within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - should not be invited to or welcomed with open arms within the Commonwealth or Allegheny County;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Allegheny County Council hereby strongly encourages visitPittsburgh to withdraw its bid to host the 2024 Republican National Convention and immediately cease any and all activities associated with any attempt to encourage such hosting.

Council hereby also expressly finds that the risks to public safety (including both violent activity and the risk of transmission of contagious disease), apparent acceptance of efforts to undermine democracy and support of

violent insurrection by factions of the Republican Party that would necessarily attend welcoming that party's convention at this time, potential direct and indirect costs associated with hosting a national political convention, and other potential deleterious effects of hosting such convention outweigh any potential undefined and uncertain economic or other benefit.