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4 SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE
5 JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL,
6 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
7 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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11 INTERVIEW OF: STEPHEN AYRES

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Friday, June 17, 2022

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Washington, D.C.

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The interview in the above matter was held via Webex, commencing at 1:36 p.m.

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2 Appearances:

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5 For the SELECT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE

6 THE JANUARY 6TH ATTACK ON THE U.S. CAPITOL:

7

8 [REDACTED], SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

9 [REDACTED], INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL

10

11 For STEPHEN AYRES:

12

13 EUGENE OHM

1

2 Mr. [REDACTED]. Good afternoon. This is the transcribed interview of
3 Mr. Stephen Ayres, conducted by the House Select Committee to Investigate the
4 January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol, pursuant to House Resolution 503.

5 At this time, I would ask the witness to please state your full name and spell last
6 name for the record

7 Mr. Ayres. Stephen Michael Ayres, A-y-r-e-s.

8 Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you, Mr. Ayres.

9 This will be a staff-led interview. And members of the committee, of course,
10 may join and ask questions if they choose to do so. But, right now, all you have on is
11 [REDACTED]. That's me. I'm an investigative counsel. There are no other
12 investigative counsel and no members in the room right now.

13 At this time, could counsel for Mr. Ayres please state their name for the record?

14 Mr. Ohm. Eugene Ohm on behalf of Mr. Ayres. For the court reporter,
15 E-U-G-E-N-E. Last name, O-H-M.

16 Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you, Mr. Ohm.

17 There is an official reporter transcribing the record of this interview, so I'm going
18 to ask that you please wait until each question is completed before you begin your
19 response. And we will try to wait until your response is complete before we ask our
20 next question. The stenographer cannot record nonverbal responses, such as shaking
21 your head. So it's important that you answer each question with an audible, verbal
22 response. I'll help you out with that. If I see you shaking your head, I'll say positive
23 response from the witness or negative response from the witness.

24 We ask that you provide complete answers based on your best recollection.
25 That's it, just your best recollection. If the question's not clear, just ask me for a

1 clarification. If you do not know the answer, please just let me know.

2 Mr. Ayres. Okay.

3 Mr. [REDACTED]. First, it's important you understand that this interview is
4 voluntary. If at any time you would like to stop speaking with us, that is your choice.
5 Similarly, if at any point you need to discuss something with your attorney in private,
6 please let us know, and we'll take a break so you can have that conversation.

7 This interview is not under oath, but because this is a formal congressional
8 investigation, you are obligated under Federal law to tell the truth, the same as if you
9 were speaking to the FBI or DOJ. It's unlawful to deliberately provide false information
10 to Congress. So, for this interview, providing false information could result in criminal
11 penalties for false statements.

12 Do you understand that?

13 Mr. Ayres. Yes, I do.

14 Mr. [REDACTED]. Okay. Third, you're not obligated to keep the facts of this
15 interview and what we discuss confidential. You are free to tell whomever you wish that
16 you met with us, including the prosecutor or judge on your case, or you can tell no one at
17 all. It's your decision.

18 Mr. Ayres. Okay.

19 Mr. [REDACTED]. The select committee is separate and independent from the DOJ.
20 So we have no involvement with the prosecutions, and the DOJ is not a partner to the
21 select committee and our investigation. We're also not a party to your criminal case.
22 And we're not agreeing to submit anything on your behalf to the judge. We also can't
23 make any representations whether if you tell the judge you met with us, if the judge
24 would be more favorable for you during sentencing.

25 Do you understand that?

1 Mr. Ayres. Yes, I do.

2 Mr. [REDACTED]. And then, last, we have agreed with your attorney not to share
3 the substance of what you say with the DOJ prior to your sentencing. There are two
4 exceptions, though. So, if you tell us about evidence about a crime we thought law
5 enforcement was unaware of or if we had reason to believe that you lied during the
6 interview, then we would be obligated to tell DOJ or another appropriate law
7 enforcement agency. And, if you tell the judge you met with us, please understand that
8 that may prompt questions from the judge about what you said and whether it's
9 consistent with your prior statements and acceptance of responsibility. If the judge
10 starts asking questions, we may get asked to respond and divulge what you said.

11 But those are the only exceptions, so is that clear?

12 Mr. Ayres. Yes, I understand.

13 Mr. [REDACTED]. So, again, before we get into the meat of the questions, let us
14 know if you need any breaks or if you would like to discuss anything with Mr. Ohm, we'll
15 make sure we accommodate that.

16 And, again, I'm the only investigative counsel on right now, but some might join.
17 If so, there may be multiple people asking questions at that point. So, if you need
18 someone to repeat something, please just say that, and we will repeat the question or
19 rephrase the question.

20 Mr. Ayres. Okay.

21 EXAMINATION

22 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

23 Q So can you tell us a little bit about yourself? So like, how old are you?
24 Where are you from? How long have you lived there?

25 A Stephen Ayres, obviously, 39 years old. Currently reside in the State of

1 Ohio. Been over here on and off 5 years here and there. I grew up in Pennsylvania
2 right on the other side of the border. So Ohio, Pennsylvania is right here; the line's right
3 here. So people bounce back and forth for work and whatnot.

4 Q Okay. Western PA, eastern Ohio, that Allegheny, Pitt area?

5 A Yeah, about an hour north of Pittsburgh, about an hour south of Cleveland,
6 like dead center of them two so.

7 Q Okay. What's your educational background?

8 A I graduated from high school. Went to votech while I was there for
9 carpentry. Got out of high school, and I started my -- I worked at KraftMaid Cabinetry
10 for 20 years, up until this stuff came about, as a supervisor there for 4 years. Had 25
11 people working for me. That's really about it right now.

12 Q Are you currently employed?

13 A Not currently. I'm starting my own construction company. You know, this
14 kind of -- all this Capitol stuff kind of put a -- for lack of better words, damper on kind of
15 really the work outlook since all this stuff started. So I do know the construction
16 industry pretty well, so I'm getting in business with a buddy of mine and getting a
17 construction company going right now.

18 Q Understood. So let's go back then to the election of 2020, leading up
19 through January 6th. So we're going to ask you pretty much just questions of what you
20 were thinking or what you were seeing or what you were feeling leading up to
21 January 6th. And then we'll go through January 6th as well. Then we'll end it with kind
22 of your views now in retrospect.

23 A Okay.

24 Q So, going back to the 2016 election -- or 2020 election -- not 2016. We're
25 not going back that far -- but to the 2020 election, how would you describe your level of

1 political engagement throughout former President Trump's term?

2 A It was a lot more -- I wasn't very political until I got on -- well, really social
3 media I feel that's what really got me more political, more following politics and whatnot.
4 Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, you know, with that -- that whole outlook on there, you
5 know, it's very easy. Everyone's expressing their views and opinions, and it gets very,
6 you know, fired up. A lot of people get very fired up about it. But, up until that point,
7 up until the social media and stuff, I really didn't follow politics, you know, all that well so.

8 Q Was it fair to say, though, that you started following on social media when
9 President Trump became President?

10 A Not specifically. I just didn't follow politics as hard until President Trump,
11 you know, took office I think.

12 Q What made the change? So why did you start following it more hard when
13 President Trump became in office?

14 A Sorry. I'm not sure if it was just social media, or if I just liked the way, you
15 know, he presented himself with, you know, his views and beliefs. I kind of think that's
16 kind of what made me start following a little bit more. Because I was a little bit
17 following them a little bit here and there back when Obama was in office, but not as
18 much. It's like, once Trump got in office, kind of seemed like it was like a lot. I started
19 watching it and following it a lot. I was reading up on it every day, researching stuff
20 every day. But it definitely took off, I would say, when he probably, you know, became
21 President.

22 Q And you started following it -- and just let me know if this is
23 wrong -- because you personally liked President Trump and his style of leadership?

24 A Yes. Yeah. That's basically, you know, a way to sum it up.

25 Q I'm going to touch on some of the social media stuff actually very shortly,

1 but before I get to that, did you read like traditional print media, like the Wall Street
2 Journal and New York Times about politics?

3 A No, not really. I always strayed away from the mainstream media. I'm
4 one of them people that research everything. I research it all, then I form my own
5 opinion, but I kind of try to stay away from the mainstream media because in my opinion
6 they're going too far left, too far right. I like to research and form my own opinion.

7 Q Okay. Did you watch any television news? I know you said mainstream
8 media. I don't know what you consider mainstream media. So I'm just going to make
9 sure I ask everything.

10 Did you watch any television channels to get your information?

11 A I would watch Fox News, you know, ABC, CBS, NBC, you know, the main
12 media, you know, news outlets. I'd watch them, but mainly it would be like Fox News
13 and then alternative channels on like YouTube. I watched a lot of -- follow a lot of
14 political commentary on YouTube. That's where I get a lot of it.

15 Q Okay. So, on YouTube then, what channels, if you can just give us a few
16 you watched to get your information?

17 A I would check out Fox News on there. There was some conservative
18 channels on there. I really can't even think of their names off top -- once all this stuff
19 started, I just quit following politics all together. So I have trouble even remembering.
20 There was just a couple talking heads on there basically that, you know, they put their
21 opinions out every day. I can't really narrow it down to just any one particular person.
22 It was a little bit of everything, watching a little bit of everybody.

23 Q Did you watch Alex Jones?

24 A I've seen some of his stuff, but I wasn't a real big fan of him.

25 Q Can you give me one example, then, just a name of one person at least that

1 you were watching on YouTube?

2 A Like Candace Owens, I'd follow her. Charlie Kirk, I'd follow him now that I
3 think about it. Some of Ben Shapiro's stuff, but I don't think he was quite as big then as
4 he is now. So, mainly, like, most of the conservative people that are on there, the bigger
5 ones.

6 Q Yeah. Got it.

7 So, going back to the social media, which social media applications did you use
8 mostly to read about politics or did you follow politics on?

9 A I would say it was probably Facebook. That was like my main one that I
10 was on and reading up on politics and all that. I'd say Facebook was the number one.

11 Q What about Parler? Did you follow anybody on Parler?

12 A No. I just -- I think -- I'm not sure if I got on that one or not, or if I did, if it
13 was brand new. I remember hearing about it. I don't know if they put that out after
14 Trump got banned on Twitter and Facebook, if that's the one. I joined it, but I didn't
15 mess around with it because the whole layout and everything, I just really wasn't big -- I
16 think I did try getting on there, but I didn't do much with it after, you know, I got in there
17 and seeing how it was and whatnot.

18 Q What about Reddit?

19 A Yeah. I follow Reddit. I liked Reddit, but I wasn't -- didn't -- I just found
20 Reddit just recently. I haven't had Reddit up until within the last probably year and a
21 half, 2 years. Other than that, it was Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were the three
22 main that I really was on.

23 Q Okay. So I hear -- I'm still going to go through a few to make sure.
24 Telegram?

25 A Nope. I don't think I have any -- I've heard of it, but I don't think I'm on

1 there or had even been on there.

2 Q You just mentioned Twitter, right?

3 A Yes.

4 Q So you follow things on Twitter?

5 A Yup.

6 Q GETTR, G-E-T-T-R?

7 A No. I've never even heard of that one.

8 Q You mentioned YouTube already.

9 So you did watch news shows on YouTube?

10 A Yes. Correct.

11 Q TheDonald.win, did you ever get on that website?

12 A No. I never heard of that one.

13 Q Gab, G-A-B?

14 A Nope, never heard of that one.

15 Q And the last one is Wimkin, W I-m-k-i-n?

16 A Nope. I don't believe I've heard of that one as well.

17 Q All right. I think you might have touched on this so just to make sure we
18 have it clear: If you had to pick one or a couple of these sources, which sources did you
19 rely on the most?

20 A They would have been -- it would have been Facebook and Twitter would
21 have been like the top two.

22 Q And YouTube as well? Because I know you mentioned some of the shows --

23 A Yeah. Following them, yeah, and the videos from there. I usually just
24 watch videos. I wasn't real active on YouTube. I just watched videos and comment
25 very seldomly. Facebook and Twitter, I'd post stuff every day and stuff like that.

1 Q And did you get to the YouTube links through Facebook a lot, or would you
2 just get on YouTube separately?

3 A I think a little bit of both, you know, because a lot of times, you could just tag
4 the YouTube videos right into Facebook. So, you know, if you watch a video, it's gonna
5 carry you right over into YouTube. So probably a lot of times I caught it right from
6 Facebook and then, you know, maybe got shifted over to YouTube from there, from the
7 link.

8 Q Makes sense.

9 I'm assuming, but correct me if I'm wrong, that you followed former President
10 Trump on these social media apps?

11 A Yes. Yeah, I did.

12 Q And, just to be clear, which site did you follow him on?

13 A I followed him on Facebook, Twitter and probably Instagram. Those were
14 the three that I think I had him on.

15 Q So, right after the general election 2020, so right after November and the
16 days afterwards, did you believe that the election had been stolen from former President
17 Trump?

18 A Oh, yeah definitely. I definitely did.

19 Q What made you think that the election was stolen? And, if you can
20 pinpoint, I guess, when did you start to believe the election was stolen?

21 A Probably that night when they saw that huge drop for Biden in the middle of
22 the night when everybody was sleeping. That's where it just, you know, it looked crazy
23 to me that that was even possible. I think it was that night myself.

24 Q Was there anything else, I guess, as the weeks continued after this
25 that made you -- I guess even more confirmed your thoughts that the election was

1 stolen?

2 A Yeah. Sorry. Yeah. Just from posts I follow online talking about the
3 voting machines, how certain voting machines were used in bigger districts. When they
4 turned around, they used smaller voting machines or like a smaller company. Then, in
5 certain, you know, big, you know, big districts, that the bigger districts seemed like they
6 were using certain voting machines there. I don't know. That's the stuff I seen a lot
7 that kind of got me thinking, oh, maybe the thing was rigged, you know?

8 Q Did you participate in any rallies or anything after the election?

9 A No. I've only been to that one rally, and that was January 6th.

10 Q So you didn't go to any "stop the steal" rallies in Ohio or Pennsylvania,
11 anything like that?

12 A Nope. Nope. That was the first one I've ever been to.

13 Q Did you follow the "stop the steal" movement? So like Ali Alexander?

14 A No. Nope. I just found out about it with my friend, Matthew Perna, when
15 they were going down there. He's like: If you want to go, we've got room.

16 That's when I rode down. I've never been to a Trump rally before that. And I
17 figured that was going to be his last one, him leaving, you know, from the Presidency.
18 So I wanted to go to at least one Trump rally before he was out of the Presidency.

19 Q And I didn't want to make this assumption; Mr. Perna was your friend, a
20 personal friend?

21 A Yes.

22 Q I'm sorry to hear about Mr. Perna's death.

23 A Thank you.

24 Q I thank you for talking to us, and even, I know it can be difficult probably to
25 talk about a friend that's been lost.

1 If you don't mind me asking you, how has that impacted you, Mr. Perna's recent
2 death?

3 A It messed with me a lot, you know?

4 Q Sorry. I'm sorry to hear that. Yeah.

5 A Thank you.

6 Q If you don't mind, when we get to the end when we're thinking about things
7 in retrospect, I might ask you just a few questions of how it might have impacted you and
8 how -- if it might have changed you. If the answer's no, feel free to say that. But just
9 want to highlight, I might get to that later on in this interview. Okay?

10 A Yup.

11 Q So you didn't attend the November 14th rally in Washington, D.C.; that's
12 correct?

13 A No. Huh-uh.

14 Q And you didn't attend the December 12th rally in Washington, D.C., either?

15 A Nope.

16 Q So walk us through, then, the factors that influenced your decision to come
17 to DC on January 6th. I know you came down on January 5th.

18 But what were you thinking about when you came?

19 A I basically was just coming for the rally because, you know, the President
20 was: Hey, come down to D.C., stop the steal rally. Like I didn't even put it into
21 perspective the actual name of it. I was basically going down just to see, you know, the
22 President speak. And, you know, like I said Mr. Perna -- and he had some friends and
23 family going down. I was like: Oh, that would be sweet. I want to go.

24 You know, he's like: Come on, we got room.

25 You know, that was only the thing, going down there to see that.

1 Like I had no idea -- I don't know if it was planned to walk over to the Capitol
2 afterwards. I don't recall ever hearing that, but like we didn't plan on going to the rally,
3 then straight over to the Capitol. Like, I don't remember ever hearing or nothing about
4 it or talk about it. I was just going for the rally. Then, at the end, when, you know,
5 Mr. Trump's like "let's march over to Capitol and show our support" or whatever, this and
6 that, that's when we decided to walk over. So it wasn't like I even planned out, that I
7 recall remembering back then.

8 Q Did you think that former President Trump was going to join you all at the
9 Capitol?

10 A I don't know if I thought he was going to or not. I just -- we stuck around
11 for 10, 15 minutes after the actual rally ended. And then we walked over there. I don't
12 know if I thought he was going to actually be over there or anything like that.

13 Q Okay. We'll get to the day of a little later.

14 Is it fair to say you came to D.C. with Mr. Perna and his family and friends because
15 President Trump was going to be speaking?

16 A Yeah. Yeah. I'd say so.

17 Q And was there anything specific that former President Trump said in the lead
18 up to January 6th that made you want to come to D.C.?

19 Like, was there something he said? Was there a tweet, anything that really made
20 you want to come?

21 A Nothing that I can think of. You know, I just saw that it was going on. I
22 was like, you know, it would be cool to go watch him talk. That's my, you know,
23 personal view. I don't remember ever hearing or seeing anything where I felt like, oh, I
24 need to be there. You know what I'm saying?

25 Q Do you remember the December 19th tweet where he said, "Will be wild"?

1 A Me or him?

2 Q Do you remember the tweet from President Trump on December 19th
3 where he said, "Be there, will be wild"?

4 A No. No. I know I put out something like that: It would be cool to be
5 there. It's going to be wild.

6 Like I didn't think of it being like something crazy was gonna happen. I just
7 meant, like: Hey, it's going to be cool. You know?

8 Q So, when you said, when you put out there "will be wild," I'm just going to
9 ask you, what were you thinking? What was going to be wild about it?

10 A Just how many people were going to be there, the rally, and all that. Like, I
11 never -- never like pre-gamed or planned anything leading up to that. I was just like,
12 cool, we're going there, just like if I was going to a concert; it's going to be wild. That's
13 like my way of saying it's gonna be fun; it's gonna be cool. You know what I'm saying?
14 Something like that. I didn't mean it like in -- suggest something like what happened at
15 the Capitol was going to take place. It was more like: Hey, this is gonna be a good
16 time.

17 Q Okay. Other than Mr. Perna, who did you travel to D.C. with?

18 A I don't even barely know them that well. His aunt, his uncle, couple
19 buddies. I don't even remember their names. What is his name? I can't --

20 Q If you don't remember, that's fine.

21 A Yeah. Like, I didn't hang out with those guys. I knew Perna from school
22 and sports and stuff. But the people that went with him, I never met them before in my
23 life.

24 Q So Mr. Perna was kind of like the center, and you were friends with him, and
25 he had other friends that came down with you all?

1 A Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I was kind of like the last addition add on to them
2 going down there. Kind of like: Hey, if you want to go, you can come.

3 So I was like: All right, cool.

4 Q If you had to put a date on it, when did you decide you were going to come
5 to D.C. on January 6th? Was it around Christmas? Around New Year's?

6 A It was a few weeks before. I'm not sure exactly how long. Could have
7 been 6 weeks before, maybe a month. I don't know like the exact time when I was
8 like -- I want to say it was like a few weeks before, but I can't remember exactly.

9 Q So well in advance, though?

10 A Yeah. I would say, at the latest, probably like 6 weeks before, I believe, at
11 the latest. But I'm thinking it was closer like a couple weeks beforehand, but I'm not a
12 hundred percent.

13 Q I guess, how were you tracking information for the rally? Were you
14 tracking it on Facebook as well?

15 A I would have just -- yeah. If I would have been following any of it, it would
16 have been on Facebook.

17 Q Were you aware of any buses or caravans taking people to D.C. for the rally?

18 A I think I remember seeing or hearing about that.

19 Q You didn't know anyone personally who used these caravans or buses to
20 come down?

21 A No, I didn't personally.

22 Q Did any elected officials have any impact on your desire to travel to D.C.
23 other than President Trump?

24 Did any other I guess elected Congressman or State officials impact your decision?

25 A No, not really. I don't recall like hearing someone saying, like, "you should

1 be down there on January 6th" or anything that would have impacted my decision, you
2 know, to go down there for the rally.

3 Q I guess another just piggyback on that question, though, were there any
4 politicians during this time period other than President Trump that you really followed
5 and thought highly of, I guess, while this "stop the steal" or certification challenges were
6 going on?

7 A I mean, I followed the -- like the big conservative, like, talking point heads
8 really. Like Ted Cruz, and -- I don't even know their names off the top of my head. But
9 I'd follow the ones that were always speaking out kind of in his favor because there
10 wasn't very many. But I would probably say I followed them on, you know, Facebook
11 and stuff and whatnot.

12 Q Ultimately, what was your goal, right?

13 You decided to come on January 6th; what was your goal or what were you
14 coming to D.C. for, right?

15 It's a little bit of a drive; 5, 6 hours from Ohio?

16 A Yeah.

17 Q So what was your goal in coming?

18 A My goal was just to go -- my personal goal was just to go see him speak at his
19 rallies. I always seen him on TV. I've seen the rallies on, you know, YouTube and stuff.
20 They were huge. My perspective, I just wanted to see him speak one time before he
21 was out of office.

22 Q So you viewed this as almost as like his last speech?

23 A Yeah. Yeah. That's how I looked at it. I figured he was leaving office; I
24 wasn't going to get a chance. I wanted to make one that was like up here in Erie, but I
25 never got a chance. And I didn't even try that hard. But I figured this was going to be

1 his last one, so I definitely want to see it.

2 Q I know we've heard former President Trump talking about a big reveal on
3 January 6th, leading up to it.

4 So, in your mind, though, when you came, you thought he was going to be leaving
5 office, or did you think there was a chance he could remain in office?

6 A I'm not even really sure. Like, I know it was like -- they called it the "stop
7 the steal" rally and stuff, but I didn't really think that it was going to be like, "hey, I'm not
8 leaving"; you know what I'm saying? I'm not sure what it really would have been, what
9 his big reveal was going to be; you know what I'm saying? You know, he kind of built
10 things up quite a bit. So I don't know. I'm not sure if he -- like I thought he was going
11 to be, like, "Oh, guess what, I'm staying," or something like that. So I'm not -- not real
12 sure.

13 Q Okay. So going more to January 6th itself.
14 You left on January 5th, right?

15 A Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yes.

16 Q That was a yes. Okay. Perfect.
17 And you traveled by car?

18 A Yes.

19 Q With Mr. Perna and others?

20 A Yes. Yup.

21 Q Where did you all stay? Did you stay in the city, or did you stay in the
22 surrounding area?

23 A We stayed at a hotel in the city, handful of blocks away. Like, it was
24 walking distance but probably took 15 or 20 minutes to walk that far.

25 Q To the Ellipse I'm assuming?

1 A What's that?

2 Q To the place where the rally was, about a 15-minute walk to where the rally
3 was?

4 A Yeah, 15 to 30 minutes at most, depending how fast you're walking I would
5 say.

6 Q When you came to D.C. on the 5th, right, for the 6th, were you expecting
7 there to be violence on January 6th?

8 A No. I didn't expect it.

9 Q You weren't expecting any violence with antifa or anything like that?

10 A Well, Mr. Perna did say that, like, antifa rides around. You got to keep your
11 eyes open for them because they'll come up and jump you, stuff like that. Other than
12 that, none like -- he never -- Mr. Perna or his buddies never once said: Hey, we're going
13 to go out looking for violence or look for violence.

14 But he said: You got to watch for antifa because they'll come up on ya and jump
15 ya and stuff like that.

16 Q So, while you're preparing for that threat, how did you prepare, if at all?

17 A What's that last part?

18 Q I guess if at all?

19 A No. Like, I didn't prepare anything differently. I mean, I kept my -- if we
20 went out walking -- I know they had like a little thing going on, on the 5th. Once we got
21 down there, we went out and got like lunch or something, or, later on in the evening, we
22 did. But we went down, they had Freedom square or Plaza I think.

23 Q Freedom Plaza?

24 A Yeah. They had something going on there, so we walked down there and
25 watched and stuff. And then, you know, we got -- when that was all ending, we stopped

1 and got a bite to eat and went back to our hotel room.

2 Q But you went to the rally at Freedom Plaza on January 5th?

3 A Yeah. Yeah.

4 Q Okay. How would you describe the environment during that rally?

5 A It was good. You know, upbeat, playing music and stuff. And we were
6 just hanging out, looking around, walking around. We ended up walking over to the
7 Lincoln Memorial, seeing the Vietnam Memorial as well. So we spent a little time there,
8 and then we walked around for a while.

9 Q Are you a military veteran? I forgot to ask at the beginning.

10 A No.

11 Q Was Mr. Perna?

12 A Not that I know of. I don't believe so.

13 Q And was there any speakers on the 5th that you were particularly excited to
14 see or that you were happy that you got to see after the fact?

15 A On the 6th?

16 Q On the 5th, at Freedom Plaza.

17 A No. I know there was some speakers going on. The only person that I
18 remember that I thought was pretty cool was the rapper. He made the rap song. I
19 remember hearing that. That was pretty cool. But, other than that, I'm not sure who
20 the speakers were, I mean, off the top of my head.

21 Q I guess, the night of January 5th leading into January 6th, do you recall the
22 President talking about Vice President Pence at that time or what he could do on the 6th?
23 Do you recall any conversations about that?

24 A I remember hearing about it, how he can -- I don't know if he can say not
25 accept the electoral votes or something. That had been about the only thing, you know,

1 that I would remember hearing that could have possibly happened.

2 Q Was that something that you were tracking or thinking about?

3 A I don't recall. But, I mean, I probably -- as much as I followed politics, I
4 probably would have been watching for that or looking into that.

5 Q Only reason why I ask is because, as we get into the 6th, right, so Vice
6 President Pence then puts out the letter that he's not going to act on the certification of
7 the vote.

8 Did that disappoint you?

9 A Yeah, it did.

10 Q Okay. Why? I guess, help me understand.

11 A I think I was -- at that point, I think I was believing, you know, it was basically
12 the whole system was rigged, you know? At that point, I was definitely believing it after
13 seeing so much information put out that, whether it be true or not, you know, I was
14 believing at that time that, you know, it wasn't a legit election. I was hoping that he
15 maybe was going to do that, but that's, you know, from the top of my head. That's what
16 I can kind of remember I think.

17 Q So let's move to January 6th.

18 Approximately, what time did you arrive at the Ellipse, if you remember?

19 A What's that? Is that where the rally was held?

20 Q That's where the rally was held. I'm sorry. I'm talking like a D.C. local.
21 What time did you arrive at the rally?

22 A I want to say we got there -- I'm not sure. What time did the rally start, at
23 11? I want to say 11, 12.

24 Q So President Trump spoke later in the morning, but the rally started much
25 earlier. I'm trying to understand when you arrived.

1 A I want to say we maybe got there maybe a half hour, maybe
2 45 minutes -- like, I'm not even remembering a hundred percent right now. I would to
3 say it wasn't long -- we weren't there -- we were standing around for a half hour,
4 45 minutes I would say, maybe even a little bit longer until Trump come on because we
5 were looking at T-shirts and stuff like that.

6 Q So you guys were outside of the security perimeter?

7 A Yeah. We weren't up inside where they had the perimeter up for the
8 President.

9 Q Did you stay for all of President Trump's speech?

10 A Yeah. We were there, and I think he stopped right around 1 o'clock.

11 Q Was -- anything about his speech stand out to you?

12 A Nothing I can think of. The only thing I really remember is him saying,
13 "Hey, let's go down and show our disdain," or whatever. I can't remember the exact
14 words. You know: Let's march on down to the Capitol and, you know, show your
15 support or something like that.

16 Other than that, it just seemed like the same stuff that he was repeating from his
17 previous rallies and stuff like that that I've seen online.

18 Q Before this, though, you weren't tracking that people may be marching to
19 the Capitol?

20 A No. Huh-uh. I don't remember hearing anything about that.

21 Q When you heard this, what did you think the point of going to the Capitol
22 was?

23 A I thought, you know, people were going to just go down there, stand around,
24 and basically be like a peaceful protest.

25 Q Well -- and I understand the peaceful protest. What were you protesting in

1 your mind at this time?

2 A At that time, I don't know if it would have been from stopping the steal, or if
3 they were, you know, hoping that the Vice President wouldn't accept the electorals. I'm
4 not really sure technically what it would have been.

5 Q But, in your mind, you were going to protest the election, right, just to put it
6 in very broad terms?

7 A Yes. Yeah. Basically.

8 Q So, when did you leave the rally, about 15 minutes after President Trump
9 finished speaking?

10 A Yeah. We basically stood around for anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes, I'd
11 say 15 because that's probably ball park before we even started to head down there.

12 Q And do you remember the path you marched down to the Capitol Building?

13 A Yeah. We walked down that main road right there that was right in front of
14 the security perimeter. That road right there.

15 Q Pennsylvania Avenue?

16 A If that's what it was. I don't know. Where the stage was set up, then you
17 had the security perimeter where everybody was sitting like in there, and then there was
18 a road. And then you had the big field and the Washington Monument. That road
19 right there, we followed that down.

20 Q Were you following the crowd? Is that basically --

21 A Yeah. We were just following the crowd down, after we were, you know,
22 obviously done standing around talking.

23 Q When did you come to understand that the Capitol Grounds might have
24 been breached, like the fencing or even the Building --

25 A When I --

1 Q -- later in the afternoon --

2 A Yeah. When I got down there, it was -- that whole place was overrun with
3 people when we got down there.

4 Q Right. So you knew this before you got there, or did you see it as you were
5 walking up?

6 A I seen it as we were walking up.

7 Q I guess, what were you thinking as you were walking there? What was
8 running through your mind as you saw that scene?

9 A Me, personally, I was just like more like a shock and awe, like holy, you
10 know, holy crap. Kind of crazy, you know, there's people everywhere, you know. I was
11 more shocked than anything.

12 Q I'm just going to ask one followup, I guess.

13 Why were you shocked?

14 A Just to see what it looked like. Like, once we start getting down there, then
15 like -- from what I came up walking straight up, you seen people kind of clashing with the
16 cops over to the far -- it would have been my far right at the time, and I was just more
17 shocked to see what was going on.

18 Q Did people appear angry as you were walking to the Capitol?

19 A Yeah. A lot of people -- a lot of people seemed like they were very upset.

20 Q Tell us some of the things they were saying, if you recall?

21 A They were saying all types -- you know, people were screaming all types of
22 stuff. They were mad that Vice President Pence was going to accept the electorals. I
23 mean, it was -- it was -- if you could think it up, you were hearing it.

24 Q Did you hear "hang Mike Pence"?

25 A I don't know if I heard that or not, but I wouldn't be surprised if I did because

1 it was pretty crazy.

2 Q And I'm just going -- were you angry as well when you were marching
3 towards the Capitol?

4 A Did you share some of that anger?

5 A Yeah. I had some, like, sentiment like that. But I wasn't like some of the
6 people there. Yeah. I was like, "Oh, man, this," you know, I was like, "This stinks," you
7 know, using different wordage obviously. But there was a lot of people that -- there was
8 people completely fired up, acting crazy, and there was other people that are just like me
9 kind of like bummed out, more or less bummed out. Not really mad. I was more or
10 less bummed out I'd say.

11 Q And why were you bummed out?

12 A Just because, you know, it kind of got all pumped up like -- maybe Mr. Trump
13 or President Trump was gonna end up staying in office. Then you find out he's doing
14 that -- or the Vice President Pence was, you know, approving it or whatever. So I
15 personally can remember feeling bummed out. I wasn't really so much mad or cheated,
16 I don't recall.

17 Q Right. So, when you get to the Capitol, were there any barriers up when
18 you arrived at the Capitol?

19 A When I got down there, I -- where we come in at, I don't remember seeing
20 barriers. There was just so many people flooding the whole entire area. So it would
21 have been hard to see anything. And then, once you started walking in there, you
22 started getting sandwiched in like sardines, and you were getting forced forward. So it's
23 like, if you were walking up and you started getting up in there, you got pushed forward
24 anyways because it was packed pretty tight.

25 Q I guess, you said you saw people clashing with the law enforcement, like you

1 said, as you were walking up.

2 Did you see violence after you got on the Capitol Grounds approaching the
3 Capitol?

4 A Approaching the Capitol Grounds -- walking up to the actual Capitol
5 Grounds, just mainly people walking.

6 Q Yeah.

7 A Once I got there -- that -- I seen people kind of clashing with the police and
8 stuff, but it was up like a hundred yards up ahead of me, 150 yards up ahead of me, but
9 they were almost like up on top of the Capitol Building it itself.

10 Q Gotcha. And, when you got on the Capitol Grounds, did you see any
11 violence?

12 A Yeah. I did see people clashing with them then, once I got up closer.

13 Q With the law enforcement officers?

14 A Yes. Yeah.

15 Q When you got close to the Capitol, were people instructing you about going
16 towards the Capitol or how to get in the Capitol?

17 Did receive any instructions from any people?

18 A There was a bunch of people with, like, bullhorns hollering stuff: Hey, do
19 this. Go that way. Do this.

20 There was quite a few people that had bullhorns. So, on top of that -- and you
21 know, people talking and people were chanting. And they were, you know -- people
22 were singing patriotic songs. It was kind of a really hectic situation. So it was kind of
23 hard to take it all in, even to understand if somebody was trying to direct people any
24 which way.

25 Q Do you recall anything specific about the people with the blow horns?

1 A They were just yelling, you know, basically, you know, the system's rigged
2 and stuff. I remember hearing stuff like that I want to say. But I don't know if I heard
3 anything like say: Hey, go through this door. Do that door. Do this. You know what
4 I'm saying? I don't remember hearing that. But I'm willing to bet there probably was
5 because, you know, of how crazy the day was.

6 Q Right. I guess, I forgot to ask this earlier.

7 Are you aware -- or, at this time, were you aware of groups like the Oath Keepers
8 or Proud Boys?

9 A I don't know. I remember seeing them, but I didn't really put like two and
10 two together. I saw people wearing like patches and stuff, but you seen people wearing
11 like bulletproof vests and stuff mixed in all through, and then some people wearing
12 like -- what they were wearing riot gear like themselves. They had a helmet on, maybe
13 not a shield on their face. People had gas masks and stuff. I wasn't really aware of
14 them, other than maybe seeing someone here and there.

15 Q You had never seen them in person before -- maybe or was it on the
16 internet?

17 A Oh, on social media and online, yeah. I seen them online. Not like in life
18 or you know?

19 Q So then just walk me through how you came to get inside the Capitol, and
20 then also answer why you left the Capitol.

21 A Well, we -- as we walked up to it, like I said, it's a lot -- cans of sardines.
22 Everyone's forcing up. We're walking up, and people are saying: Keep pushing
23 forward, keep pushing forward.

24 We got up to where I -- which I say is my left-hand side walking down from the
25 Washington Monument was the far left side. I remember getting up top. There was

1 some people climbing up on some -- I don't know -- I forget what you call them -- can't
2 think of them offhand -- scaffolding is going up the building. I remember watching some
3 people going up scaffolding on that.

4 Over towards the right, I seen people clashing with police officers. And then,
5 when we were over on the left, after you -- I don't know. I can't remember what it looks
6 like offhand, but once we got up top where it's like flat where the door is on the left-hand
7 side where we walked through, it was packed crazy tight in there. And then I
8 remember -- you know, I was basically -- I had my phone out, and I was recording. And I
9 pulled my phone out just to basically record what was happening, what was taking place.

10 I remember we went through the door right there. There was four police officers
11 standing in there when we went in. We stood there. People were chanting all types of
12 stuff. They were singing like patriotic songs. I think they were saying, "who's House,
13 our House," stuff like that, U.S.A. I stood there for a couple minutes recording my
14 phone like this, just panning around, showing what was taking place. And then I walked
15 right down -- I believe -- is it called the rotunda I think it's called?

16 Q Yes.

17 A Which is basically like that long hallway that went out to the other very end
18 of the Capitol that had velvet ropes on each side, and there was police officers lined up
19 on each side. I walked right down that and right out the other side of the building. So I
20 was in there like a total of 9 minutes, 10 max, and then I just --

21 Q What were you hoping to accomplish by going into the Capitol, if anything?

22 A I remember -- well, when we got up there, I remember we were all standing
23 around there, and then the doors opened. I didn't know if the police opened it or
24 someone maybe broke it open. But, when I walked through the doors, I remember
25 seeing like there were three or four cops standing in there. So, you know, I was thinking

1 they're letting us walk through. We walked in, and we stood there, chanted. Then we
2 walked out the very end. Like, my -- I was just -- me, personally, I was like: Oh, cool,
3 we can walk through.

4 And then, like I said, we walked out down the other end, and that was it.

5 Q So, again, just to make sure, you stay in the Capitol for about a total of
6 10 minutes?

7 A Yeah, 9 to 10 minutes from what the video footage I've seen.

8 Q And why exactly did you just walk out of the building instead of staying in?

9 A I wasn't like -- me, personally, I wasn't there to like do any destruction or
10 fight with cops or none of that. I just wanted to walk through just to walk through
11 basically.

12 Q You weren't trying to get to the House Chambers or Senate Chambers --

13 A No. I never --

14 Q -- or the --

15 A Nope. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

16 I never left the velvet ropes that were there. There was velvet ropes down that
17 whole hallway. I stayed right in them and walked right out the other end. But I didn't
18 have no goal to get anywhere else in there.

19 Q Were you following President Trump's tweets throughout that afternoon?

20 A I don't think so. I was -- basically had my phone out recording until it died.
21 I was trying to record and post videos. I was taking pictures. So I don't know -- I don't
22 recall seeing his tweets or anything.

23 Q I'm going to read one specifically, and just tell me if you remember this. So,
24 at 2:24, President Trump tweeted that: Mike Pence didn't have the courage to do what
25 should have been done to protect our country and Constitution.

1 The tweet goes on, but do you recall this tweet?

2 A No. I don't remember seeing it. I mean, I may have, but I don't recall
3 because I think I was doing a lot of just basic recording myself and posting pictures and
4 videos. So I don't recall -- I don't recall seeing that.

5 Q Okay. And do you recall President Trump's tweet video -- it was like a video
6 tweet message at 4:17 where he told the rioters to go home?

7 Do you remember this video message?

8 A I don't recall seeing it on my phone myself, personally, but I remember
9 hearing people talking about it.

10 Q Tell me more about that.

11 So people at the Capitol were talking about it?

12 A Yeah. I remember once that was -- excuse me -- once that was, his tweet
13 or whatever that was, his post come out, I remember hearing people talking about it and
14 letting other people know that it was put up.

15 Q And what was the reaction?

16 A I think -- I want to say, but I'm not a hundred percent, I want to say it was
17 kind of calming down a little bit, except for a few handful of people that were going -- still
18 going hard and trying to fight with the cops and all that stuff. I don't -- but I can't -- I
19 remember hearing about it, but I don't know if it changed the outlook, if it effected any
20 change, made people calm down, or if it affected anything.

21 Q Well, I'm not thinking big picture.

22 I'm thinking of the people that you saw talking about the tweet message to go
23 home. Did it influence you to go home?

24 A Yeah. Definitely. I think so. Like I'm not even sure what time we walked
25 out of there. I know it was getting dark. So, you know, he put that out -- what is that,

1 January? So the sun's going down 4:30, 5 p.m., so that could have been roughly when
2 we started pulling out because the sun -- it wasn't dark yet when we left. The sun was
3 going down.

4 Q But why did the 4:17 tweet message, though, why did that influence your
5 decision to go home?

6 A You know, that's basically your President, you know, asking you, you
7 know -- that's how I look at it, like: Hey, chill out.

8 Even though I wasn't really doing anything, kind of following that order. Because
9 he said: All right, guys let's cool it out.

10 I wish he would have done it, you know, 10 minutes after he seen what started
11 and what was going on. But kind of following that as like, you know, let's get out of
12 here, which I wish it would have been done a little earlier honestly.

13 Q So after leaving -- let me -- why do you wish it would have been done a little
14 earlier? I should --

15 A Because I didn't know that was going to break out the way it did. I wish the
16 moment -- my personal opinion, I wish the moment he saw what was happening, I wish
17 he would have come out and he would have posted something like that or did something
18 like that, you know, half-hour after his rally was over because it was getting insane down
19 there.

20 Q Do you think it would have -- and just by what you saw, you think it might
21 have calmed things down if he would have tweeted a little earlier?

22 A Personally, I believe so. I mean, unless the people that were really there
23 hell bent on causing trouble; you might not have got them people to calm down. But,
24 for people that were like me that were there -- we weren't there to cause trouble; we
25 were there to basically be a peaceful protester -- I think that would have really swayed

1 people like me, you know, the guys that were kind of on the sidelines watching the stuff
2 take place. I don't know what it would have done for the people that were there, you
3 know, hell bent on causing problems. I don't know if it would have done anything for
4 them. Maybe. It might have. But, you know, we don't know that right now.

5 Q But, for the people like you, the words "go home" really mattered?

6 A Oh, yeah. I think so. I bet it played a big role with a lot of people, you
7 know? Your President's telling you, you know: Hey guys, chill out. You know?
8 I'm willing to bet it would have done a lot.

9 Q So where did you go after you left the Capitol?

10 A We basically -- we walked home. I think they put out -- the D.C. mayor put
11 out a -- I can't think of what it's called off the top of my head, basically shut everything
12 down. We were trying to get some food on our way home, and we couldn't. We just
13 basically left there and walked back to the hotel room.

14 Q What were you guys thinking or feeling when you got back to the hotel
15 room?

16 A I was more like shocked more than anything. You know, I seen some
17 people fighting at doors as -- after I walked out of the Capitol and walked around, I
18 remember seeing people going at one of the front doors there. I stood there, watched
19 them. Then I walked around the other side, almost working on my way back around to
20 the original entrance I went in. And I saw people going at it there. Stood there for a
21 while.

22 Like I said, I was pulling my phone up, putting it down. Pulling my phone up
23 because I ended up losing battery service right there on that last door I was just speaking
24 about. I seen the cop get drug out, down to the ground, and people started jumping on
25 him. But then my phone died right then and there, and I ran over -- I was going to help

1 pick him up. Other people picked him up and ushered him back into the building
2 because there was some people that were trying to hurt him, and there was
3 some -- other people helping to get him up and get him back in the building so he didn't
4 get hurt.

5 Q Did you leave to go back to Ohio the next day?

6 A Yeah. That next morning, we left and headed back.

7 Q With the same group, right?

8 A Yeah. Yup.

9 Q So this might be a question more appropriate for Mr. Ohm. Just, can you
10 give me a current status of your case? I understand that you've entered a guilty plea,
11 but just current status of your case.

12 Mr. Ohm. Yes. Mr. Ayres, he pleaded guilty with the sentencing, I believe, is
13 on -- September 13th, he pleaded guilty to the 1-year misdemeanor, entering and
14 remaining in a restricted building.

15 Mr. [REDACTED]. Thank you.

16 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

17 Q So I now want to talk about, kind of, your feelings looking back on it. I
18 know you've had a lot that's happened since then, including the death of Mr. Perna. So,
19 believe me, I'm very sensitive to the changes.

20 But can you just help me understand what changes, if any, have occurred in your
21 life since January 6th?

22 A Talking to me?

23 Q Yes, for you.

24 A Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I thought you were still talking to --

25 Q No worries.

1 A I was kind of zoning out there when I heard that. Yeah. I've had a lot of
2 changes in my life. I lost my job that I worked with -- worked at for 20 years. My wife
3 had a baby boy 2 months later. You know, I had a lot of changes, especially when I've
4 been at a company for 20 years, you know? Then with Matt.

5 Q Have your feelings changed about the election since January 6th?

6 A Yeah. I don't follow politics as much as I did.

7 Q Why not?

8 A Just because of everything that happened.

9 Q With Mr. Perna in particular?

10 A Well, him, and the riot itself.

11 Q Yeah. So help me understand, why do you believe that the riot on
12 January 6th occurred, if you have thoughts looking back now?

13 A My personal opinion is just I think it was just building up, building up, you
14 know? I think a lot of people thought the election was stolen or rigged or whatever you
15 may say. I think just people got mad, and, you know, they didn't know how else to voice
16 their opinion or anything like that.

17 Q So I understand that individuals might have been mad, including yourself. I
18 think that's normal, right, within our country?

19 But I guess, what led to the spark, if you had to put a reason?

20 A The spark for -- what do you mean? The Capitol thing?

21 Q Yeah, that led to the Capitol thing. What was the spark, right?

22 It's one thing to be mad, and it's one thing to actually go into the Capitol. So
23 what was the spark?

24 A I would say that it just had to be the election results itself honestly. You
25 know, I think people felt like, you know, they were being left behind by the system or

1 whatever it may be. I just think maybe, you know, after, you know, how many votes
2 were out there versus, you know, how well he did on his first election, I think, you know, I
3 think people feel like, you know, not really maybe -- if they're being betrayed or if they
4 feel like they're being left behind.

5 And, you know, I think that's kind of what helped build it up. Plus, I, you know,
6 Mr. Trump or President Trump was always online tweeting too, you know? So, when
7 you got millions upon millions of followers, you know, that look on -- there's probably a
8 lot of people that look on every word he says -- excuse me one second -- on every word
9 that he says, you know, they're going to follow and do as he says, you know? He puts a
10 lot of -- he used to put a lot of fiery -- fiery tweets out there and posts and stuff, and I'm
11 sure it probably -- it probably helped build up to all of that. It probably helped build and
12 added fuel to all that fire.

13 Q You just said he would tweet, and a lot of people would do what he says
14 when he tweeted.

15 Is that kind of going back to your point about President Trump saying "go home"
16 sooner, how it could have maybe helped?

17 A Oh, yeah. I believe it definitely would have helped. You know, if he would
18 have come out a half-hour, you know, at 1:30 -- because I heard that the commotion kind
19 of got started down there around 1 or a little before 1. If he would have been out and
20 on there at 1:30 saying, "Guys, this is not what we stand for, this is not what we're here
21 to do," you know, I think it would have played a huge part.

22 Q Looking back now, what do you think we can do differently as a country to
23 prevent a situation like January 6th from ever occurring again?

24 So that's one of the things we're doing as a committee, right? We're trying to
25 make recommendations to prevent another January 6th.

1 So what can we do differently as a country to prevent this from ever happening?

2 A I don't know if it's so much as a country because, you know, I think it's the
3 political divide in this country has gone to a whole new level. I really -- I think that one
4 of the biggest things that really made Trump supporters mad was the way Facebook and
5 Twitter banned him. When you can ban, you know, the President of one of -- the free
6 nation of the world, when you can try to silence somebody with -- the President of the
7 United States, whether it be a Democrat or Republican, you know, I think that's what
8 fired up a lot of people, is that you're trying to -- whether you want to call it opposition or
9 what, you're trying to silence people that way. I think that's -- my personal opinion, I
10 think that's what really got people really mad and fired up, was the way Facebook and
11 Twitter silenced him, which -- and I know it angered me at the time. But I kind of feel
12 like that's what really got people really fired up, was when they silenced him. You know,
13 yeah, he's on there. He's tweeting. He's posting. You know, people aren't -- you
14 know, he's going to have stuff that people don't like. There's going to be stuff that he
15 posts that people do like, but to silence somebody for a view or a belief considering we're
16 considered a free nation, I think that's what got people fired up.

17 Q So that came afterwards, right? The silencing came after January 6th. He
18 was kicked off Twitter on January 7th.

19 A Okay. Yeah. I was thinking that beforehand. I apologize.

20 Q No worries.

21 A Yeah. I don't know. I'm not sure. You know what? I'm not real sure.
22 I just don't know if it was just the political divide, you know, and most of the political
23 divide I seen was through social media. And I think that's what got me fired up, was the
24 social media. The social media I felt like just intensified everything.

25 Q Is there anything that I didn't ask about that you think I should know about?

1 A Nothing that I could really think of offhand.

2 Mr. [REDACTED]. Mr. Ohm, anything you think we should add to the record?

3 Mr. Ohm. You mind if I jump on with Mr. Ayres real quick?

4 Mr. [REDACTED]. That's fine. We'll recess in place.

5 Mr. Ohm. Okay.

6 [Recess.]

1

2 [2:35 p.m.]

3 Ms. [REDACTED] Was there anything, Mr. Ohm, you wanted to add to the record or
4 Mr. Ayres?

5 Mr. Ayres. I know one of the -- one of the things I was thinking about previously
6 was basically how -- I felt like -- me personally, I felt like we were kind of led astray, for
7 lack of better words, you know. I just felt like, with the whole January 6th thing, the
8 Capitol thing, I kind of felt like we were kind of -- basically were kind of played on, you
9 know, from -- from the President telling us we need to march down there, we should
10 march down there and, you know, show your support or disdain or whatever his words
11 were, you know, that is one of the things that bothers me the most. Because I kind of
12 feel like personally he used us as kind of -- I don't know, a pawn or chess piece. That is
13 one of the things that bothers me the most is how I feel like we were basically kind of
14 used as a strategic positioning or something. I don't know how to really word it myself.
15 That is one thing I feel the most out of all this. You know, I lost my job. You know, my
16 wife just had a baby, you know, basically bought a new house because of all this stuff, you
17 know. And it is just like I feel as though we were basically kind of used in a
18 situation -- used in the situation the way everything played out, you know. That is my
19 personal belief.

1

2

BY MR. [REDACTED]:

3

4

Q And part of that being used was, you know, for example, former President Trump not trying to deescalate that situation that day? Just letting it --

5

A Yeah.

6

Q -- rage on. Is that fair?

7

8

A Yeah, yeah. That's what I said, I wish -- I just wish he would have come out 1:30 and said: Look, this is not what we are about.

9

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Peaceful protesting. I am all about being a peaceful protester, you know. But, when there is people getting hurt, you know, fighting -- a young lady lost her life, plus numerous people, you know, later on from this as well. You know, I really wish he would have just come out a lot sooner, you know, 3 hours earlier. If he had come out at, what, 4:20 I believe you said, or 4:30, I really wish he would have come out 3 hours earlier and said: Look, this is not what we are about. And that is just one of my biggest -- my personal feelings is how I, you know, I feel like we were used and abused as a -- like I said, like a pawn in the situation. And that is my biggest feeling about it.

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Q When did you start to feel that you might have been used on January 6th? I guess when did those feelings start to manifest?

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A Probably, like -- I consider myself to be a fairly intelligent person. I felt like, within a couple of days, maybe even that day, I feel like we were kind of used to try to swing that agenda or push that agenda or whatever it would be considered. I don't know how you would look at it or consider it, but I kind of feel like that is the way we ended up being used as in the position. I didn't like that, you know. I come down there just to see the rally because that is my only reason I really wanted to go down there, is just to see him talk, see all the people together, and stuff like that. And, for

1 that to be -- for having a good thing, a good fun time, to be spun into what it was spun
2 into, you know, it is not good.

3 Q We have heard from other witnesses that they felt that some of President
4 Trump's words on January 6th was -- and this is quotes, "pouring gasoline on fire."

5 A Yeah, I --

6 Q What are your thoughts after hearing that?

7 A I mean, it doesn't -- it didn't take much. When you get that many people in
8 an area, whether it is a small area or a big area, it doesn't take much, when you are in
9 that position of power, whether you are the President of the United States or you are a
10 rock star, it is very easy to swing people the way you want them to go, or it is very easy to
11 manipulate people in masses to get them to do whatever you want or whatever, you
12 know. So him having that -- I don't know how many people ended up being there. It
13 looked like a million people to me. There was a lot of people. If you are there and you
14 are firing everybody up and saying, like, "the election was rigged, the election was
15 stolen," and then "head on over to the Capitol," I mean, you had -- my personal opinion,
16 you had to know what was going to happen, you know.

17 Q Okay.

18 A There is no way you get people fired up and then say "go over here" and
19 then not expect something to happen.

20 Q So then what is your response then? You just said, right, you had to know
21 what was going to happen. So what is your response then to the 2 or 3 hours in
22 between him then telling you to go home?

23 A Yeah. It just makes me mad, you know. Because you should have seen
24 that. If you didn't -- there is no way, you know -- he is a pretty intelligent man, you
25 know. He is the President of the United States. He's got, you know, businesses. He is

1 a very -- obviously, he is a very intelligent man. You have to be -- I am sorry, but there is
2 no way you don't know something's going to happen, especially after you get them all
3 worked -- people worked up and fired up, and then you send them on their way. I
4 mean, you know.

5 Q Thank you for providing that perspective.

6 Mr. ██████. Is there anything else, Mr. Ohm, Mr. Ayres, that you think we
7 might be missing?

8 Mr. Ohm. No, not from me.

9 Ms. ██████. All right.

10 Mr. Ayres. Well, my biggest thing is miss -- you know, my buddy Matt, you know.
11 He felt there was no other way out, you know. It is sad. Very sad, because he was a
12 good person, you know. He used to travel all over the world to help kids learning
13 English, speak English, you know. He was just a good person.

14 Mr. ██████. And, look, all right, this is -- believe me, I empathize with you with
15 the death of a friend. I know it is -- I can't even imagine how hard it is.

16 When you said Mr. Perna didn't feel like there was any way out, what do you think
17 he meant by that?

18 A I just think he felt that way with the -- with the judicial system and maybe
19 the DOJ. I mean, I know everything takes time; it takes processes. And, you know, you
20 have got to -- I understand, you know, working out pleas. And then you have got the
21 charges going through. And you can't charge -- you can't say: Hey, you get a year
22 probation and you get 6 years for the same charges.

23 I understand -- so I don't know. I understand you have to work those all out. It
24 has all got to be coordinated properly so everybody is treated fairly. I don't know if, you
25 know, waiting got to him, you know. The fear of the unknown, you know.

1 Q Right, right.

2 A But I understand the situation that, you know, they are in and the judges,
3 that they are in and stuff like that. I understand that, just to be as fair as possible.

4 Q Again, I appreciate you providing these perspectives and taking the time to
5 speak with us today. Part of our investigation is to try to understand the why, which you
6 have provided --

7 A Uh-huh.

8 Q -- information about and understand what we can do now, which you have
9 also provided information for. And, for us to be able to make recommendations on
10 policy and legislation, it is important for us to hear from individuals like you who were
11 there --

12 A Uh-huh.

13 Q -- about what we can recommend. So, on behalf of the committee, I thank
14 you for taking time to meet with us today.

15 A No problem. I appreciate it.

16 Mr. [REDACTED]. All right, we will go off the record at 2:43.

17 [Whereupon, at 2:43 p.m., the interview was concluded.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing ____ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

Witness Name

Date