

JUST A QUARTER OF REPUBLICAN SENATORS VOTED FOR RICK SCOTT

Politico is one of the outlets that is focusing most productively on areas of tension between Article I Republicans and Trump. Their very good House journalists have this piece on objections to impoundment (which would strip the House of its most basic function, the power to appropriate), use of military for mass deportation (from Rand Paul), and tariffs (from John Thune). Josh Gerstein noted Chuck Grassley's opposition to Trump's plan to replace all the current Inspectors General. And they did an uneven post on which Senators might be most likely to oppose Trump (which was perhaps too early to note that Utah's Senator-elect John Curtis was among the first to go on the record with concerns about Matt Gaetz). Mike Rounds gave a hawkish interview in support of Ukraine. And after Lisa Murkowski said (in a little-noticed Alaska interview) that she won't vote to confirm any Trump nominee who has not undergone an FBI background check, four more Senators – Susan Collins, Kevin Cramer, Rounds, as well as Joni Ernst – joined Murkowski in expressing support for background checks (though without making them a litmus test), with Bill Hagerty scoffing at the entire idea that they're necessary.

There are far too many Democrats dismissing the possibility that there can be meaningful opposition to Trump from Congress. The Senate, especially, held up some of Trump's plans the first go-around, even before he sicced an armed mob on them. And if nothing else, these people love their own prerogatives, and so will – at least selectively – defend those (as the bid to insist on FBI background checks would be a means to do).

More importantly, we don't have the luxury of assuming Republicans will routinely capitulate

to Trump: It is the job of the Democratic party, at this point, to give them cause to do so. Yes, Mitch McConnell failed in 2021 when he had an opportunity to disqualify Trump. He will have further opportunities to amend his own failure, and it's simply not an option not to fight to get him to do so. Not least, because the mere act of doing so effectively may have an effect in 2026, if elections are really held.

And that's why I've been trying to identify what I'm calling the Scott Caucus: The (just) 13 Republicans who voted for Rick Scott in the first round of the election for Majority leader. There was a good deal of pressure, including from online influencers who can elicit mob and also Elon Musk, the mobster incarnate, to vote for Trump's pick for Majority Leader, Scott. But he lost in the first round of voting, with a reported outcome of:

- Thune 23
- Cornyn 15
- Scott 13
- Not voting 2

Thune won the second round between him and Cornyn 29-24.

To repeat: Just 13 members of the Senate voted, on a secret ballot, for Trump's preferred candidate for Majority Leader. There's undoubtedly a lot that went into that vote, but the 38 Senators who affirmatively voted against Scott are people who voted, at least partly, against capitulating to Trump.

We don't know who all is included in that list, but these people publicly endorsed Scott:

1. Marsha Blackburn
2. Ted Cruz
3. Hagerty
4. Ron Johnson
5. Mike Lee
6. Rand Paul

7. Marco Rubio

8. Tommy Tuberville

I suggested that this vote, of the people who voted against Charles Q. Brown to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, might be a proxy for other Senators who prefer gross politicization against basic competence – though according to his public statements, Josh Hawley voted for Thune.

Whoever the other five people are (Rubio, of course, will be replaced once he is confirmed as Secretary of State), they're just a small fraction of the GOP Senate.

Republicans will enjoy their time in the majority, and most of the time most Republican Senators will gleefully support what Trump will do.

But when given a choice to capitulate immediately or to uphold their own prerogatives, an overwhelming majority of Republican Senators voted to defend their own privilege.