Twitter Thread by Alexandra Erin the Meadow We Can Build a Snowman



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I'm slightly obsessed with this "#PenceCard" nonsense which is like the Platonic ideal of the current level of Trump election stealing conspiracy theory nonsense.

Here's a thing about the United States: the vice president famously *does nothing*. By design. The job is not like the vice president of marketing or whatever where the guy has a job. Mike Pence is the spare president. He's there in case anything happens to the first one.

In the original formulation under the constitution, the vice president was the runner-up of the presidential race. Nobody ran for it. There was no assumption that it would be an ally of the president; more likely they would be rivals.

They're officially "president of the senate" just to give them something to do to keep them around the capital but they're not a senator and only get to vote if there's a tie, so most of the time that ceremonial role is fobbed off an actual senator.

But this senate presidency that we give the vice president currently has attached to it some purely ceremonial duties in the very perfunctory part of the election process where votes are counted and reported to Congress.

That's the reality of the vice presidency: it's a nothing job. Vice presidents have no power. Frequently presidents delegate things to them because the presidency is a hard job and the president can't be everywhere, but the vice president is an office with no actual power.

But the conspiracy theories among Trump True Believers need there to be a miracle genius turnaround play *somewhere*, and each time one of their miracles falls through (as they all do, because they're made up), that ups the pressure to find the next one.

So somebody wanks out a "legal opinion" that Pence could and in fact *must* use his "plenary power" (this is a phrase they all love because it sounds official and important) to refuse the "fraudulent" votes, because it's illegal for him to accept them.

And because things sound more legal and official when you attach arbitrary things to them and because doomsday cults need deadlines, they attached to this the idea that he must reject the votes "by the third Wednesday in December".

Which was a week ago, incidentally.

But conspiracy theories don't care about any calendars except their own, so in their world, TODAY is the third Wednesday in December, which means that they expect and demand Pence plays "the Pence card" in the next twenty minutes or so.

When Mike Pence fails to play "the Pence card" because it's not a thing and he has no actual power and "the Pence card" isn't even a saying like "the Trump card" is... this will only convince the faithful that Trump has an even bigger, better card to play later.

Anyway, I'm waiting until midnight to turn in because I want to see some of the reactions.

I expect there will be some meltdowns, but probably even more people seamlessly pivoting to "Well obviously he wouldn't do it in public." or "It's actually January 6th."

Or even trying to figure out a way to make next Wednesday "the third Wednesday in December".

I should also mention that some of the flock have decided the Pence Card *has already been played*; since Mike Pence's name showed up in a lawsuit to throw electors out, they think that's him doing it.

Small problem is: he's a defendant in that case, not a plaintiff.

This is a thread on the lawsuit that has been mistaken for the "Pence Card", with a note on how it's actually suing Mike Pence could obligate the government to defend him. If it makes it to trial, which seems dubious.

https://t.co/kmPoiQ3KYa

> The only really notable feature of the absurd new election lawsuit in D.C. is that the plaintiffs sued Mike Pence in his official capacity, meaning I suppose that the Justice Department will now be obliged to defend him from the many pages of absurdity. https://t.co/PqKLZHWtSI pic.twitter.com/bUc9uWMnD6
>
> — Brad Heath (@bradheath) December 22, 2020

Here's another thread on that suit listing many, many, many ways in which it is ripe for dismissal.

https://t.co/Agqr6NmrbG

> There is actually some mystery here. As much as I'd love to see it dismissed under Fed R Civ P 12(b)(1-7)(inclusive), it will probably be narrower. In which case we're looking at any or all of a considerable number of plausible options.
>
> Specifically: https://t.co/zv4zMESxZs
>
> — Mike Dunford (@questauthority) December 23, 2020

My understanding of the suit's current status is that the judge has ordered for a hearing schedule to be set after the plaintiffs prove that they have properly served all defendants (there are many), which may not even actually be possible.

https://t.co/4i8Qzz3yLJ

> Also, good luck attempting service on the Electoral College, which isn't really an organization or a thing. This is like suing "the states."
>
> Prison inmates who represent themselves generally avoid goofy stuff like this. pic.twitter.com/Cvbk7v5zzO
>
> — Brad Heath (@bradheath) December 22, 2020

And it's midnight. Time to survey the reactions.

Merry Pencemas, everybody.

Looks like the predominant response so far is to blame Pence for not playing the non-existent #PenceCard; some people are shifting expectations to January 6th and some are assuming it's more Secret Governance We Can't Know About Yet.

These people are very big fans of the idea of Secret Governance. Which is the opposite of what the stuff they get mad about would lead you to believe. But they love the idea of secret arrests, secret trials, secret executions, etc.

And of course the theory that the lawsuit that, I repeat, is *suing Pence* must be Pence playing the #PenceCard because it's a legal document and Mike Pence's name is on it and nothing actually means anything to these people, it's all just free association.

Anyway, I have to go to bed. I just...

I'm not sure I've successfully conveyed how *bizarre* the idea that an election would hinge on some unique power we gave to the vice president only, which only affects the election of the president and vice president.

It's bananas.