

# The 17 worst things Mitch McConnell did to destroy democracy

by Joan McCarterDaily Kos Staff :

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Mitch McConnell [announced Wednesday](#) that he will be stepping down as Republican leader of the Senate in November. And, for the sake of the democracy he's spent decades trying to destroy, that moment can't come soon enough.

Here are just a few of his career lowlights.

## 1. He stole a Supreme Court seat from President Barack Obama.

When Justice Antonin Scalia died in February 2016, McConnell insisted that the seat would remain empty because it was an election year and, according to a rule he created, the seat could therefore not be filled.

"The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court Justice," he said. "Therefore, this vacancy should not be filled until we have a new President." He refused to even give Obama's nominee, Merrick Garland, a hearing much less a vote.

But three years later, asked what he would do if the same situation arose in 2020 under President Donald Trump?

"Oh, we'd fill it," [he said](#). And that's just what he did.

## 2. He stole a Supreme Court seat from future President Joe Biden.

And he did this after changing his "no new Supreme Court justice in the last year of a president's term" rule—to install the ultra-conservative Amy Coney Barrett on the court eight days before the 2020 election.

The night Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died in the fall of 2020, [according to](#) McConnell's former chief of staff, McConnell told Trump he would absolutely fill the vacancy just weeks out from the election, "and you've gotta nominate Amy Coney Barrett."

## 3. He packed the federal judiciary for Trump with [white men](#), many of them [unqualified](#).

While the Supreme Court seats may be the most visible part of McConnell's stacking of the judiciary, his goal went further. As [Frontline](#) noted, that meant he wanted his legacy to be one of "filling the federal judiciary

with conservative judges.”

#### **4. He vowed to obstruct Obama.**

“The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president,” he [told](#) the National Journal in 2010.

#### **5. He vowed to obstruct Biden.**

“One hundred percent of our focus is on stopping this new administration,” he [said](#) in 2021.

#### **6. He made the debt ceiling a [permanent hostage](#) starting in 2011.**

McConnell may not have invented the government shutdown, but he made sure that shutdown threats were a regular part of American politics while shutting down efforts to fix the problem. “I think some of our members may have thought the default issue was a hostage you might take a chance at shooting,” McConnell said before a vote in 2011. “Most of us didn’t think that. What we did learn is this—it’s a hostage that’s worth ransoming.”

#### **7. He turned the [filibuster](#) into a weapon.**

McConnell used the filibuster “more than ever in history” during the Obama administration to try to deny Obama any legislative victories, just as he’d threatened to do. And he kept using it long after Obama left office, including to block [a 9/11-style Jan. 6 committee](#).

McConnell [reportedly worked the phones](#) to be sure the commission bill died, asking some Republican senators to join the filibuster as “a personal favor” to him despite the appeal from the mother of fallen Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick to support the commission.

#### **8. He [voted to acquit](#) Trump after the Jan. 6 insurrection.**

And, just like when he blocked the nomination of Garland to the Supreme Court, he blamed it on the timing.

As [The Washington Post](#) described it, “We witnessed a historic confession of hypocrisy and deceit on Saturday when Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) went to the floor after voting to acquit Donald Trump in the former president’s Senate impeachment trial.” That came after McConnell had given a speech calling Trump’s actions “a disgraceful, disgraceful dereliction of duty” and saying that Trump was “practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day.”

But McConnell had an excuse: timing. He claimed it was too late to convict Trump. For McConnell, it’s always too late to do something. Unless it isn’t.

## 9. He built a career, and a big campaign nest egg, fighting gun safety regulations.

That includes pulling down \$1.3 million in donations from the NRA while blocking efforts to address mass shootings. No single individual may be completely responsible for America's failure to address gun violence, including school shootings, but McConnell comes close.

## 10. He destroyed campaign finance reform and filibustered any effort to get money out of politics.

He may have called money in politics “a cancer” at the start of his career, but once he was in the Senate, he devoted himself to protecting that cancer. And spreading it.

## 11. He blocked votes to save the Voting Rights Act.

That included refusing to hold hearings on an amendment named in honor of the great congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis. McConnell claimed he was a supporter of the VRA at the beginning of his career, but as Senate leader, he weakened the act at every turn. This, along with his other moves to make it more difficult to vote, earned McConnell the nickname “the gravedigger of American democracy.”

## 12. He tried to kill Obamacare—and failed.

"This is clearly a disappointing moment," he said after the repeal attempt failed 51-49. "I regret that our efforts simply were not enough this time."

## 13. He blew off coal miners with black lung disease from his own state.

That included giving a group of miners who drove from Kentucky to meet with him just two minutes of his time, but McConnell always found time to help mine owners prop up the dying industry.

He failed to support legislation that would reclaim mine land for economic development. He shied away from a bipartisan coalition in his state that is nurturing tech, medical, and even solar jobs. He led the Republican effort to cut taxes on the coal companies—taxes that would help struggling miners. And he has not pushed to shore up a badly underfunded miners' pension fund.

## 14. He's working with the Trump campaign right now to endorse Trump for another term.

Sources involved in the negotiations give a weak explanation. “We’ve reached the part of the primary where the party is coming together,” one source told The Hill. “The absolute worst thing

that can happen to this country is electing Joe Biden for four more years, and you can expect to coalesce around that point over the next nine months,” the source continued. So much for protecting our institutions from the guy who tried to “torch” them.

## **15. He [named himself](#) the “Grim Reaper.”**

He vowed to kill—literally kill—progressive legislation to address climate change and expand Medicare.

“Are we going to turn this into a socialist country? Don’t assume it cannot happen,” he said in 2019. “If I’m still the majority leader of the Senate, think of me as the Grim Reaper. None of that stuff is going to pass. None of it.”

## **16. He took [this infamous picture](#) in front of a Confederate flag.**

He said the photo of him beaming in front of the racist flag was taken when he was a freshman senator, at a meeting of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. And no, he isn’t sorry.

“I don’t regret going to speak to a group which at the time was not being considered, you know, a pariah in our society,” he said years later. “I, over the years, have probably been to plenty of groups and shaken hands with a whole lot of people who didn’t agree with me.”

## **17. He tried [to silence](#) Sen. Elizabeth Warren. It backfired.**

During a floor speech against the confirmation of Jeff Sessions as Trump’s attorney general in 2017, the Massachusetts senator read—or tried to read—a damning letter from Coretta Scott King, written in 1986, which blasted Sessions for “the awesome power of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens” while serving as a United States attorney in Alabama.”

McConnell didn’t like that and insisted Warren had violated a rule against demeaning a fellow senator. And he cut her off.

“She was warned,” McConnell said. “She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.”

The joke’s on McConnell, though, because his *tsk-tsking* of Warren became a meme. And a hashtag. And a [tattoo](#). And a [fundraiser](#). And a rallying cry.

So long, Mitch. And good riddance.