



## U.S. Senate Runoff Election and Capitol Riots

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Both Democratic candidates for the United States Senate in the run-off elections in Georgia won. With the vice-presidency, the Democrats have gained a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This will make it less likely that the Republican Party can block the incoming president's legislative initiatives and appointments to the administration. During the certification of the presidential election by a joint chamber of Congress, participants in a rally in support of President Donald Trump broke through police lines and into the Capitol. Four people died in the riots. After nearly seven hours, the deliberations resumed, and Congress certified the election of Joe Biden as the next president of the United States.

### **Why was there rioting during the certification of electoral votes?**

The Congress set the date as 6 January for a joint Senate–House of Representatives session to certify the electoral college results of the presidential election. This year, on that same day, President Trump spoke to a rally of his supporters in Washington. During it, he again called for protesting the result, which he has argued was conducted unfairly in several key states. He then called on the participants of the rally to go to the Capitol and protest, where they then burst across police lines and broke into the building. Members of Congress were in session and as protesters entered the Capitol, the deliberations were suspended, and members, employees, and visitors in the chambers were evacuated or hid in barricaded rooms within the building. Hours later, police managed to get the situation back under control and Congress resumed the proceedings, which ended in confirming Biden's victory.

### **How will the riots affect the start of Biden's presidency?**

While the demonstrators occupied parts of the Capitol, President-elect Joe Biden gave a televised address calling on Trump to appear on television and demand his supporters leave the Capitol building immediately. Biden's declaration was conciliatory in general and was addressed to supporters of both major parties and emphasised the need to rebuild trust in state institutions and democratic processes. The events that took place at the Capitol and Biden's reaction will

be cited by the future administration as a justification for the need to restore the stability and predictability of the U.S. federal government, confidence in the state, and to build support for proposed reforms. Biden, realising the deep political division in American society, will try to consolidate his supporters around this message in the first months of his presidency.

### **How will having a majority in the Senate influence Biden's policy?**

The result of the run-off elections gave the Democrats 50 votes in the Senate. The vice-president in this case acts as the deciding vote (assuming no members cross party lines). Biden should now be to nominate members of his administration and receive Senate confirmation. Support from both houses of Congress will allow the passage of reforms promised by Biden in his campaign, including those related to healthcare, counteracting climate change, immigration and tax reform, as well as combating the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the adoption of further stimulus packages for the U.S. economy. Stable support in Congress will ease the conduct of foreign and security policy, including in the area of concluding new international agreements. The change of majority in the Senate should not affect the broad Congressional support for a strong U.S. presence in NATO and in supporting American companies in foreign markets.

# PISM SPOTLIGHT

## **What model of opposition will the Republican Party likely adopt?**

The events on Capitol Hill, in which radical Trump supporters took part, pose a serious problem for the Republican Party, which has tried to define itself as the party of law and order. Despite Trump's departure from office, the Republican Party will have to contend with his ongoing political legacy. In addition to moderate Republicans, Congress, state and local

authorities comprise politicians who see the continuation of Trump's radical rhetoric as an opportunity to achieve further election success (including these include some supporters of conspiracy theories). This will make it difficult to formulate a uniform message and prepare for the 2022 midterm elections and the presidential elections of 2024. Republicans also will be forced to simultaneously develop a new political programme that will allow them to keep Trump voters as well as win over anti-Trump conservatives.