

ECF No. 125. The government now files this motion with respect to all defendants.¹

I. ARGUMENT

A. This Court Should Preclude the Defendants From Arguing Entrapment By Estoppel Or Making A Public Authorities Defense

The government moves to prohibit the defendants from making arguments or introducing irrelevant evidence that former President Trump or other officials gave the defendants permission to attack the U.S. Capitol, in what are commonly known as “entrapment-by-estoppel” or “public authority” defenses.²

The entrapment-by-estoppel and public authority defenses are closely related and derive from a constitutional prohibition against “convicting a citizen for exercising a privilege which the State had clearly told him was available to him.” *United States v. Sheppard*, No. 21-cr-203, 2022 WL 17978837, at *7 (D.D.C. Dec. 28, 2022) (quoting *Cox v. Louisiana*, 379 U.S. 559, 571 (1965)). Both defenses are narrow ones, however, and a defendant may succeed on them only if he meets rigorous evidentiary requirements. *See United States v. Alvarado*, 808 F.3d 474, 484-85 (11th Cir. 2015) (“The public authority defense is narrowly defined, however, and a defendant will not be allowed to assert the defense, or to demand that the jury be instructed on it, unless he meets certain evidentiary prerequisites.”); *United States v. Baker*, 438 F.3d 749, 755 (7th Cir. 2006) (“The [entrapment-by-estoppel] defense is a narrow one.”). In particular, to succeed on an entrapment-by-estoppel claim, a defendant must prove:

- (1) that a government agent actively misled him about the state of the law defining the offense;
- (2) that the government agent was responsible for interpreting,

¹ The July 22, 2022 motion also contained arguments seeking to preclude Doolin from offering improper character evidence relating to his prior employment as a firefighter or emergency medical technician. Because this aspect of the motion is not applicable to the other defendants, the government does not include it here.

² Defendant Joshua Doolin has already given notice that he may raise such a “public authority” defense. ECF No. 161. The other three defendants have joined that notice. ECF No. 165.

administering, or enforcing the law defining the offense; (3) that the defendant actually relied on the agent's misleading pronouncement in committing the offense; and (4) that the defendant's reliance was reasonable in light of the identity of the agent, the point of law misrepresented, and the substance of the misrepresentation.

United States v. Chrestman, 525 F. Supp. 3d 14, 31 (D.D.C. 2021) (quoting *Cox*, 906 F.3d at 1191).

The contours of the public authority defense are less certain, though one judge in this district has articulated a similar four-part analysis:

[A]n individual (1) reasonably, on the basis of an objective standard, (2) relies on a (3) conclusion or statement of law (4) issued by an official charged with interpretation, administration, and/or enforcement responsibilities in the relevant legal field.

Sheppard, 2022 WL 17978837 at *8 (quoting *United States v. Barker*, 546 F.2d 940, 955 (D.C. Cir. 1976)). Common between these standards is, among other things, that a government official must offer a "state" or "statement" of the law.

Defendants have not, and cannot, argue that, in urging his supporters towards the Capitol, then-President Trump made a "statement" of law. By now, several courts in this district have considered various defendants' arguments that the President's words immunized their actions on January 6. To the government's knowledge, all these arguments have failed. *See Sheppard*, 2022 WL 17978837 at *9 (prohibiting defendant from seeking discovery or presenting evidence at trial on entrapment-by-estoppel or public authority defenses); Order at 2, ECF No. 39, *United States v. Thompson*, No. 21-cr-161 (D.D.C. Mar. 23, 2022) (excluding evidence of former President Trump's statements for all purposes as unduly prejudicial under Fed. R. Evid. 403); *United States v. Grider*, No. 21-cr-022, 2022 WL 3030974, at *4 (D.D.C. Aug. 1, 2022) (declining to instruct jury on defense of entrapment by estoppel); *Chrestman*, 525 F.Supp.3d at 33 (noting that an entrapment-by-estoppel defense is "highly unlikely" to succeed and declining to consider it as weighing in favor of granting pre-trial release).

Defendants’ efforts to assert an entrapment-by-estoppel defense have uniformly failed, as the defense is available “only when the official’s statements or conduct state or clearly imply that the defendant’s actions are lawful.” *Sheppard*, 2022 WL 17978837 at *9. The key challenge for defendants is that, as Judge Bates observed, “President Trump neither stated nor implied that entering the restricted area of the Capitol grounds and the Capitol building or impeding the certification of the electoral vote was lawful.” *Id.* Rather:

[Trump’s] speech simply suggests that it would be an act of “boldness” to “stop the steal.” Thus, allowing [the defendant’s] reliance on these words would be an instance of allowing “following orders, without more, [to] transform an illegal act into a legal one”—something the D.C. Circuit has unequivocally declined to do.

Id. (quoting *United States v. North*, 910 F.2d 843, 879 (D.C. Cir. 1990) (per curiam), *opinion withdrawn and superseded in part on reh’g*, 920 F.2d 940 (D.C. Cir. 1990)).

Similarly, Judge Kollar-Kotelly, in considering an entrapment-by-estoppel argument, noted that “former President Trump’s statements did not in any way address the legality of the actions he urged his supporters to take. He did not, for example, assure them that marching along Pennsylvania was ‘lawful’ or that occupying Capitol grounds was ‘permissible.’” *Grider*, 2022 WL 3030974 at *3. In short, then-President Trump did not “actively misle[a]d [the defendant] about the state of the law,” because Trump did not make any statement about the law at all. *Id.* at 2 (quoting *Chrestman*, 525 F.Supp.3d at 14).

Yet, even if then-President Trump had made a statement about the law, allowing those statements to immunize the defendants’ conduct would raise serious constitutional concerns. As Chief Judge Howell observed about another entrapment-by-estoppel defense by a similarly situated defendant, “No American President holds the power to sanction unlawful actions because this would make a farce of the rule of law.” *Chrestman*, 525 F.Supp.3d at 32:

[N]o President may unilaterally abrogate criminal laws duly enacted by Congress as they apply to a subgroup of his most vehement supporters. Accepting that

premise, even for the limited purpose of immunizing defendant and others similarly situated from criminal liability, would require this Court to accept that the President may prospectively shield whomever he pleases from prosecution simply by advising them that their conduct is lawful, in dereliction of his constitutional obligation to “take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” U.S. Const. art. II, § 3. That proposition is beyond the constitutional pale, and thus beyond the lawful powers of the President.

Even more troubling than the implication that the President can waive statutory law is the suggestion that the President can sanction conduct that strikes at the very heart of the Constitution and thus immunize from criminal liability those who seek to destabilize or even topple the constitutional order. In addition to his obligation to faithfully execute the laws of the United States, including the Constitution, the President takes an oath to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.” U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 8. He cannot, in keeping with his constitutional function and his responsibilities under Article II, lawfully permit actions that directly undermine the Constitution.

Id. at 32–33 (D.D.C. 2021). In other words, to allow an entrapment-by-estoppel or public authority defense based on the President’s false statements of law would implicate both the Take Care clause and the presidential oath of office, and more fundamentally question the nature of the rule of law in America.

Although *Chrestman* involved an argument that former President Trump gave the defendant permission to enter the Capitol grounds, the reasoning in *Chrestman* applies equally to any argument that other officials or law enforcement officers gave permission to the defendants to do the same. Just as a President cannot unilaterally repeal laws, no other officials or members of law enforcement could use their authority to allow individuals to enter the Capitol building during a violent riot. As Chief Judge Howell observed, “the logic in *Chrestman* that a U.S. President cannot unilaterally abrogate statutory law applies with equal force to government actors in less powerful offices, such as law enforcement officers protecting the U.S. Capitol Building.” Memorandum and Order, *United States v. Williams*, No. 21-cr-377, at *2 (D.D.C. June 8, 2022).

Even if the defendants could establish that an official or officer told them that it was lawful to enter the Capitol building or allowed him to do so, the defendants’ reliance on any such

statement would not be reasonable considering the “obvious police barricades, police lines, and police orders restricting entry at the Capitol.” *Chrestman*, 525 F.Supp.3d at 32. Moreover, the defendants’ actions contradict any argument that they relied on any such statement by law enforcement when they decided to unlawfully enter the Capitol grounds and make their way towards the Capitol building. The defendants should be prohibited from arguing that their conduct was lawful because someone allegedly told them it was.

“[E]ntrapment by estoppel is a defense rather than an evidentiary objection and, accordingly, should have been raised prior to trial.” *United States v. Colon Ledee*, 967 F. Supp. 2d 516, 520 (D.P.R. 2013). The defendants have indicated that they may raise the related public authorities defense. ECF Nos. 161, 165. For the reasons discussed above, the government asks the Court to preclude defendants’ from raising these defenses at trial, or at least direct the defendants to offer proof of such evidence and explain why such defenses are legally tenable. If the defendants cannot offer compelling evidence or explanations, the Court should prohibit them from making arguments or attempting to introduce evidence that former President Trump or other officials authorized their conduct at the Capitol.

B. This Court Should Preclude The Defendant From Arguing That Alleged Inaction By Law Enforcement Officers Made Their Conduct On January 6, 2021 Legal

In addition to prohibiting arguments that any officials or officers permitted the defendants to enter the Capitol grounds, the Court should bar the defendants from arguing that any failure of law enforcement to act rendered the defendant’s conduct legal. The same reasoning that applied in *Chrestman* again applies here. That is, like the President, a law enforcement officer cannot “unilaterally abrogate criminal laws duly enacted by Congress” through his or her purported inaction. *Chrestman*, 525 F.Supp.3d at 33. An officer cannot shield an individual from liability for an illegal act by failing to enforce the law, nor can an officer ratify unlawful conduct by failing

to prevent it.

“Settled caselaw makes clear that law officer inaction—whatever the reason for the inaction—cannot sanction unlawful conduct.” *Williams*, No. 21-cr-377 at *3; *see also Garcia v. Does*, 779 F.3d 84, 95 (2d Cir. 2015) (en banc) (entrapment-by-estoppel defense rejected after defendants argued that their prosecuted conduct had been implicitly approved by the police but could not show that it was “affirmatively authorized” by the police). The same principles apply here. The defendants should be prohibited from arguing that their conduct was lawful because law enforcement officers allegedly failed to prevent it or censure it when it occurred.

C. This Court Should Preclude The Defendants From Arguing That Their Speech Or Conduct Was Protected By The First Amendment

The Court should preclude the defendants from eliciting evidence, arguing, or asking questions suggesting that there was a First Amendment right to protest inside the restricted area around the Capitol that day. At trial, the government will show that the Capitol Grounds were restricted on January 6 within the meaning of 18 U.S.C. § 1752(c)(1)(B) (defining a “restricted building or grounds” as “any posted, cordoned off, or otherwise restricted area . . . of a building or grounds where the President or other person protected by the Secret Service is or will be temporarily visiting”).

There is no First Amendment right to protest in a restricted area. The government can—and on January 6, did—restrict an area that is a traditional public forum for legitimate government ends. This Court has affirmed that the government may close a public forum in similar circumstances. *See Mahoney v. United States Marshals Service*, 454 F. Supp. 2d 21, 32-33 (D.D.C. 2006) (U.S. Marshals Service did not violate First Amendment by restricting access to sidewalk in front of St. Matthew’s Cathedral for Red Mass, even though sidewalk was a traditional public forum). Unsurprisingly, other courts have similarly upheld temporary closures of traditional public

for a for safety reasons. *See Menotti v. City of Seattle*, 409 F.3d 1113, 1129-30 (9th Cir. 2005) (finding that an emergency order closing a core area of downtown Seattle to protests during World Trade Organization conference was constitutional in part because its purpose was to maintain and restore civic order); *Marcavage v. City of New York*, 489 F.3d 98, 105 (2d Cir. 2012) (“[T]here can be no doubting the substantial government interest in the maintenance of security at political conventions”); *Citizens for Peace in Space v. City of Colorado Springs*, 477 F.3d 1212, 1222 (10th Cir. 2007) (“In this case, there can be no doubt that the City’s interest in providing security to a gathering of defense officials is of the highest order”); *Bl(a)ck Tea Society v. City of Boston*, 378 F.3d 8, 11 (1st Cir. 2004) (upholding a street-closure plan around the Democratic National Convention that made it nearly impossible for groups wishing to demonstrate to do so within sight and sound of the delegates).

On January 6, 2021, the United States Capitol Police and the United States Secret Service coordinated to establish a restricted perimeter around the Capitol building that encompassed a portion of the Capitol grounds. Although the defendants may attempt to suggest otherwise,³ no member of the public, including the Defendants, had a First Amendment right to engage in protest or speech within that restricted area. The Court should enter an order precluding the defendants from eliciting testimony to the contrary and precluding defense counsel from arguing to the contrary or stating during voir dire, questioning, or opening or closing statements that defendants were engaged in protected speech or pursuing their “right” to protest at any point when they were on U.S. Capitol grounds.

³ For example, Olivia Pollock stated in an interview that “it’s all right to protest against something that we see as wrong. And it’s, everybody’s right as an American citizen. And if you take that, which is what they were doing, punishing us for protesting, then the least we could do is stand on the steps of the Capitol.” Tracey Eaton, *Florida Protestor Rejects “Domestic Terrorist” Label* (Aug. 17, 2021), <https://traceyeaton.com/index.php/2021/08/17/olivia-pollock/>.

D. This Court Should Preclude The Defendants From Arguing In A Manner That Encourages Jury Nullification

The defendants should be prohibited from making arguments or attempting to introduce irrelevant evidence that encourages jury nullification, whether during voir dire or at trial. As the D.C. Circuit has made clear,

A jury has no more “right” to find a “guilty” defendant “not guilty” than it has to find a “not guilty” defendant “guilty,” and the fact that the former cannot be corrected by a court, while the latter can be, does not create a right out of the power to misapply the law. Such verdicts are lawless, a denial of due process and constitute an exercise of erroneously seized power.

United States v. Washington, 705 F.2d 489, 494 (D.C. Cir. 1983). Evidence that only serves to support a jury nullification argument or verdict has no relevance to guilt or innocence. *See United States v. Gorham*, 523 F.2d 1088, 1097-98 (D.C. Cir. 1975); *see also United States v. Funches*, 135 F.3d 1405, 1409 (11th Cir. 1998) (“No reversible error is committed when evidence, otherwise inadmissible under Rule 402 of the Federal Rules of Evidence, is excluded, even if the evidence might have encouraged the jury to disregard the law and to acquit the defendant”).

The government has identified the following subject areas that are not relevant to the issues before the jury and that could serve as an improper invitation for the jury to nullify its fact-finding and conclusions under the law. The Court should preclude any reference to these issues, or similar arguments, either during voir dire, argument or questioning by counsel, or in the defense case-in-chief.

1. Selective Prosecution

The defendants may claim that they have been unfairly singled out for prosecution because of their political views.⁴ But a “selective-prosecution claim is not a defense on the merits

⁴ For instance, the government has identified an online fundraising page with defendant Joshua Doolin’s name and picture on it titled “Free the Political Prisoners.” The page appears to have been taken down since Doolin’s counsel was informed of it.

to the criminal charge itself, but an independent assertion that the prosecutor has brought the charge for reasons forbidden by the Constitution.” *United States v. Armstrong*, 517 U.S. 456, 463 (1996). Regardless of whether alleged discrimination based on political views is a proper basis for challenging the indictment—which the defendants have not claimed to date—it has no place in a jury trial. *See United States v. King*, No. 08-cr-002, 2009 WL 1045885, at *3 (D. Idaho Apr. 17, 2009) (“The Court will therefore exclude any evidence or argument as to selective prosecution at trial.”); *United States v. Kott*, No. 3:07-cr-056, 2007 WL 2670028, at *1 (D. Alaska Sept. 10, 2007) (precluding the defendant from educating evidence to support a selective prosecution claim at trial). Rather, such an argument could serve as an improper invitation for the jury to nullify its fact-finding and conclusions under the law; the defendants should therefore be precluded from making it.

2. Statements Regarding The Alleged Offenses’ Punishment Or Collateral Consequences of Conviction

The defendants may face significant prison time were they to be found guilty in this case, and the defendants should not be permitted to arouse the jury’s sympathy by introducing any evidence of or attempting to argue about the hardships of prison or the potential effect of incarceration on their families or employment prospects.

It is black-letter law that the jury should not consider such penalties in reaching its verdict. *See, e.g., United States v. Reed*, 726 F.2d 570, 579 (9th Cir. 1984) (a defendant’s possible sentence “should never be considered by the jury in any way in arriving at an impartial verdict as to the guilt or innocence of the accused.”); *Rogers v. United States*, 422 U.S. 35, 40 (1975) (jury should have been admonished that it “had no sentencing function and should reach its verdict without regard to what sentence might be imposed”). Indeed, courts in this district often give a jury instruction stating exactly that: “The question of possible punishment of the defendant in the event

a conviction is not a concern of yours and should not enter into or influence your deliberations in any way. The duty of imposing sentence in the event of a conviction rests exclusively with me. Your verdict should be based solely on the evidence in this case, and you should not consider the matter of punishment at all.” D.C. Redbook 2.505.

Thus, the above-mentioned issues are irrelevant, and any reference to them would invite jury nullification and should be excluded. *See United States v. Bell*, 506 F.2d 207, 226 (D.C. Cir. 1974) (“evidence which has the effect of inspiring sympathy for the defendant or for the victim . . . is prejudicial and inadmissible when otherwise irrelevant”) (internal citation omitted); *United States v. White*, 225 F. Supp. 514, 519 (D.D.C 1963) (“The proffered testimony (which was clearly designed solely to arouse sympathy for defendant) was thus properly excluded.”).

E. This Court Should Preclude The Defendants From Arguing Self-Defense Or Defense Of Others

The defendants have not formally raised claims of self-defense, but if they do, such arguments should be precluded. To establish a prima facie case of self-defense, the defendants must make an offer of proof of“(1) a reasonable belief that the use of force was necessary to defend himself or another against the immediate use of unlawful force and (2) the use of no more force than was reasonably necessary in the circumstances.” *United States v. Biggs*, 441 F.3d 1069, 1071 (9th Cir. 2006). “If a defendant cannot proffer legally sufficient evidence of each element of an affirmative defense, then he is not entitled to present evidence in support of that defense at trial.” *United States v. Cramer*, 532 Fed. Appx. 789, 791 (9th Cir. 2013) (citing *United States v. Bailey*, 444 U.S. 394, 415 (1980)).

Here, the defendants will not be able to present any evidence of a reasonable belief that their actions were necessary to defend themselves against the immediate use of unlawful force. While the defendants may have objected to law enforcement’s presence at the U.S. Capitol,

officers' efforts to repel and defend themselves from the defendants and others in the crowd, or their directives that the rioters move from their position and leave the area, such objections are not relevant to a claim of self-defense. *See United States v. Urena*, 659 F.3d 903, 907 (9th Cir. 2011) (observing that "harsh words from another, insulting words, demeaning words, or even fighting words" does not provide license to "stab the offending speaker in the neck, bash their skull with a baseball bat, send a bullet to their heart, or otherwise deploy deadly force in response to the insult").

The defendants' own actions undermine any claim that they had a reasonable belief that they were engaged in an act of defending themselves. The Court should exclude any testimony and evidence purporting to assert a claim of self-defense.

F. This Court Should Preclude The Introduction Of Any Defendant's Culpability Relative To Co-defendants Or Other Rioters Or Other Acts of "Good Conduct" By Any Defendant On January 6, 2021

The defendants each engaged in efforts to impede law enforcement officers on January 6, 2021. Additionally, Doolin informed FBI agents that he and several other individuals formed a wall around a police officer who had been dragged into the crowd in order to protect the officer and that Doolin believed he may have saved the officer's life. The Court should preclude any argument that the defendants' lack of additional criminal conduct on January 6, 2021 or allegedly helpful acts negate their criminal conduct. *See United States v. Camejo*, 929 F.2d 610, 612-13 (11th Cir. 1991) (witness's proffered testimony that a defendant declined to participate in a separate, contemporaneous narcotics conspiracy was an inadmissible "attempt to portray [the defendant] as a good character through the use of prior 'good acts'"). Indeed, such evidence would not be particularly probative of whether the defendants are guilty of the offenses with which they are charged; many Capitol Riot defendants acted both violently and helpfully towards law enforcement at different times on January 6, 2021. *See, e.g., United States v. Fairlamb*, No. 21

Cr. 120 (RCL), ECF No. 50 (Government Sentencing Submission), at 14-19 (defendant who offered police officers water and offered to assist them in leaving the area subsequently shoved and punched another officer).

Evidence of past “good acts” by a defendant are generally not probative unless a defendant is alleged to have always or continuously committed bad acts or engaged in ceaseless criminal conduct. *United States v. Damti*, 109 Fed. Appx. 454, 455-56 (2nd Cir. 2004) (citations omitted) Ceaseless conduct occurs when it is alleged that all the defendant’s actions were illegal. *Id.* When that is not alleged and prosecution can point to specific criminal acts, then evidence of good acts is not probative of the issue of guilt at trial. *Id.* Using specific instances of good acts “to prove lack of intent . . . is not only disfavored, it is not permitted under Rule 405(b).” *United States v. Marrero*, 904 F.2d 251, 259–60 (5th Cir. 1990) (affirming decision to exclude evidence that the defendant “provided more services to some clients than they were actually billed for and that sometimes she rendered services free of charge,” which the defendant sought to introduce to show that she did not intend to improperly bill a government agency for medical services).

Even if probative, however, the introduction of evidence of conduct with which any particular defendant is not charged risks confusing the issues by inviting the jury to weigh each defendant’s culpability relative to his or her co-defendants, suggests to the jury an improper basis on which to render a decision. The Court should preclude the defendants from offering such evidence pursuant to Rule 403 and exclude the evidence as its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of confusion of the issues or misleading the jury. *United States v. King*, 254 F.3d 1098, 1100 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (“Evidence that is admissible under Rule 404 may nonetheless be excluded under Rule 403 ‘if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, confusion of the issues, or misleading the jury.’”). Any alleged

specific good acts by the defendants are not connected to the issues of this case. Introducing evidence of such acts carries an unnecessarily risk of distracting the jury by allowing it to decide based, not on whether the evidence showed that the defendant committed the charged crimes, but instead on whether the defendants performed unrelated good deeds. *See United States v. Zodhiates*, 235 F. Supp. 3d 439, 453 (W.D.N.Y. 2017), *aff'd* 901 F.3d 137.

II. CONCLUSION

Motions in limine are “designed to narrow the evidentiary issues for trial and to eliminate unnecessary trial interruptions.” *Graves v. District of Columbia*, 850 F.Supp.2d 6, 10 (D.D.C. 2011) (quoting *Bradley v. Pittsburgh Bd. of Educ.*, 913 F.2d 1064, 1070 (3d Cir. 1990)). The government presents these issues to the Court to prepare this case for an efficient trial. For the reasons set forth herein, the United States respectfully requests that this Court grant the government’s motion in limine.

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Respectfully submitted,

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