

Ginni Thomas says she regrets post-election texts to Meadows

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and LISA MASCARO yesterday



WASHINGTON (AP) — Virginia Thomas, the wife of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, says she regrets sending texts to then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows

after the 2020 election, telling the [House Jan. 6 committee](#) that “I would take them all back if I could today.”

Thomas — known as Ginni — is a longtime conservative activist. In a transcript of the interview released by the panel on Friday, she told investigators she was “emotional” after the election when she sent several texts to Meadows urging him to stand firm with then-President Donald Trump as he falsely claimed that there was widespread fraud in the election.

In the texts, she bemoaned the state of American politics and called the election a “heist.” Thomas told the panel she still feels there were election irregularities, but she does believe that Joe Biden is the president of the United States.

“You know, it was an emotional time,” Thomas told the committee. “I’m sorry these texts exist.”

The nine-member panel sought Thomas’s interview, and she appeared voluntarily. While Thomas urged Meadows to act, and she is married to one of nine Supreme Court justices who were at the time reviewing Trump’s election challenges, investigators did not believe she played a major role in Trump’s efforts to overturn the election or his inaction as the violent insurrection unfolded. Her name does not appear once in the [committee’s final report](#) released last week.

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Still, the committee sought to speak to her as it built a comprehensive account of the [Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection](#) and the weeks beforehand. The committee’s chairman and vice chairwoman, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said the panel wanted to speak to her after her name came up in communications with other witnesses.

Thomas’ attorney Mark Paoletta said in a statement Friday that her absence from the report was a conclusion that “was obvious from the beginning” and that her post-election activities were “minimal and mainstream.”

In the interview, Thomas characterized herself as an “instigator” of Groundswell and other conservative advocacy groups that have met weekly as a coalition for years. She and her husband are longtime associates of conservative lawyer John Eastman, an architect of the scheme to have several 2020 battleground states send alternative electors for Trump, rather than Biden.

Thomas said that while she was interested in pursuing claims of voter fraud, she had largely stepped aside during the aftermath of the election because she felt her presence as the wife of Justice Thomas often “chilled” the discussion. She insisted she operated separately from her husband.

“It’s laughable for anyone who knows my husband to think I could influence his jurisprudence,” she said. “The man is independent and stubborn.”

Thomas said throughout the interview that she still had concerns about election fraud, but offered little evidence. Pressed by the investigators about her post-election efforts to challenge the election results, Thomas demurred.

When the panel told her that Trump-aligned attorney Cleta Mitchell testified under oath that Thomas had asked her about potential fraud in Georgia’s elections, Thomas said she could not recall the conversation.

“I don’t have any memory of it,” Thomas told investigators. “Anything I was doing was looking for fraud and irregularities in the election, not to overturn it.”

Multiple times, the lawmakers delved more pointedly into Thomas’s responses — and she had few specifics to offer in return.

“I think I understood you to say you never saw any list of fraud or irregularities,” Cheney asked her at one point.

“Right,” Thomas responded. “I know. I wasn’t very deep.”

“But you’re confident there was fraud and irregularities?” Cheney continued.

“I was hearing it, Congresswoman, from a lot of people I trust,” Thomas said.

Cheney asked Thomas if she was aware that Trump’s own advisers, attorney general and others had told him there was no fraud that would change the outcome of the election.

“That was news to me, Congresswoman,” Thomas replied.

Cheney asked when she became aware of that.

“I think sometime after this committee started its work,” Thomas replied.

But Thomas said even if she had been aware, it wouldn’t change her views. “I just think there’s still concerns,” Thomas said, while also acknowledging that Biden is the president.

Over and again, the panel confronted Thomas with her own words, including a text to Meadows a week after the election in which she suggested attorney Sidney Powell “will help the cavalry come and fraud exposed and America saved.” Powell was behind some of the most outrageous claims by Trump’s allies, including that foreign countries were hacking voting machines.

Thomas explained to investigators that at the time she didn’t really know Powell, and as she learned more in the weeks to come, “I kind of got off that train.”

She also told investigators she reached out to Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner as she tried to encourage the defeated president’s team to investigate potential voter fraud after the 2020 election.

“I was trying to buck him up and encourage him to stand firm until all the evidence is in,” Thomas told investigators she wrote to Kushner in an email.

At one point, she did elicit sympathy from the investigators.

“I think it might be a unanimous view of everyone on this call and in this room that I don’t know how many of you would want your texts to become public on the front page of The Washington Post,” Thomas said, referring to the first reports of her communications.

“I understand that,” said California Rep. Adam Schiff, a Democratic member of the committee. “And I’m sure you’re right, no would like to see their personal texts in the newspaper.”

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.