

KAMALA HARRIS

'A sacred obligation': How Harris is approaching certifying her own election loss to Trump

The vice president will preside over a joint session of Congress on Monday, four years after Trump supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

'A sacred obligation': VP Harris on certifying results of 2024 election

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By Yamiche Alcindor

On Monday, as Vice President Kamala Harris presides over a joint session of Congress to certify her own election loss to Donald Trump, she will be focused on ensuring a peaceful transfer of power and avoiding the deadly chaos that enveloped the Capitol exactly four years ago,

according to interviews with five people familiar with her thinking, including a White House official, two current Harris aides and two former Harris aides.

In a recorded video message about her role Monday, obtained first by NBC News, Harris says it is a “sacred obligation” that she will uphold, “guided by love of country, loyalty to our Constitution and my unwavering faith in the American people.”

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On Jan. 6, 2021, Trump held a rally in Washington, D.C., where he baselessly claimed that the election was stolen from him and urged his vice president, Mike Pence, not to certify the election results. Many of his supporters then marched to the Capitol and stormed the building.

On that day, Harris, then the vice president-elect, was inside Democratic National Committee headquarters when a pipe bomb was discovered near a park bench outside the building. Capitol Police and the Secret Service evacuated her minutes later.

Harris has accepted the 2024 results, and there are no large-scale Democratic protests planned in what is expected to be unseasonably cold weather with significant snowfall.



— Vice President Kamala Harris arrives to preside over a joint session of Congress to ratify the 2024 presidential election results at the U.S. Capitol on Monday. Win McNamee / Getty Images

The vice president said she believes she has a chance Monday to reiterate the democratic norms of the country, and she has made clear to those close to her and Democratic leaders that she plans to have a voice in politics after she leaves office, despite her loss to Trump, according to interviews with current and former Harris aides.

“Today, at the United States Capitol, I will perform my constitutional duty as vice president of the United States to certify the results of the 2024 election,” Harris says in her new video message, adding, “As we have seen, our democracy can be fragile. And it is up to each of us to stand up for our most cherished principles.”

The video aims to cement Harris’ steadfast belief that the vice president’s role in certifying election results is “solely ministerial,” while also reminding all Americans of the role they play in preserving our democracy, according to a White House official. The official added that Harris, in her concession speech following Election Day, made clear she would engage in a peaceful transition of power, and she has “consistently worked to do so in the weeks since.”

“She feels that it’s important to uphold the standards and pillars of our democracy and make sure that people know that she doesn’t only support democracy when it is in her favor,” said one current senior Harris aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to candidly describe the vice president’s thinking. “She was very intentional that she didn’t want anything about this day to be about politics or her being the nominee. We took the execution of this duty for granted until it became a violent day in history. So, knowing that, she is clear-eyed. She wants to make sure that people know that this is what democracy looks like.”

Still, a former longtime Harris aide who worked on her campaign said while Harris may not show it Monday, it will also be emotional for the vice president and many of her supporters.

“There’s definitely sadness and frustration,” said the person who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly. “She believed she should have won the race, but the country didn’t want to go in that direction.”

Another senior Harris aide reiterated that she will not let politics or disappointment get in the way of certifying votes.

“The vice president understands that our democracy requires elected leaders who have taken the sacred oath of office and everyday citizens alike to actively preserve it,” the aide said. “It is with this deep sense of responsibility and duty in mind that the vice president will certify the presidential election on Jan. 6 and reaffirm the will of the American people.”

A former Harris aide who has been spending time with her, including at holiday parties last month, also said Harris has been telling her allies, including her own family members, that they need to push forward.

“Backstage at Howard, she was telling members of her own family that we’re not going to have any pity parties, that we have a lot to be proud of in the way that we waged the campaign, and telling people to carry themselves with pride,” the former Harris aide said. “And then she delivered that message in many of the holiday parties to current and former staff, to the campaign staff, to donors that were in attendance at those parties, to members of Congress and advocacy group leaders that were part of the guest list of some of those parties.”



— Kamala Harris delivers her concession speech at Howard University in Washington on Nov. 6.

Shuran Huang for NBC News

That former aide, as well as a current aide, also said it is “highly likely” that after leaving office, Harris will set up an organization to be able to travel, do speaking engagements and advocate for some of the issues she spoke about on the campaign trail. It wasn’t clear exactly what legal form such a group would take yet. The aides also said Harris has not decided what her next move will be.

But former and current aides say Harris is open to considering a number of endeavors including running for president in 2028 or running for governor of California in 2026, noting a Black woman has never been elected governor of any state. Some have also suggested Harris become a professor or even host a cooking show, though it’s not clear Harris would be interested in any of those options. In the short term, after leaving office, Harris is expected to move back to California.

“She’s still in a stage where she’s not made any decisions about exactly what remaining in the fight will look like, but she just overall resolves to remain in the fight,” the former aide who

attended the holiday parties said. “I don’t think she’s ruled anything in or out on that.”



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