

Congress is set to certify Trump's win on Monday. Here's what to know.

Lawmakers must still gather on Monday as required by law, though they have previously changed the certification date when it was inconvenient.

By Mariana Alfaro
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Congress will meet Monday to certify the results of the 2024 election, finalizing President-elect Donald Trump's win ahead of his inauguration Jan. 20.

Unlike the certification process of President Joe Biden's win on Jan. 6, 2021 — when a mob of Trump supporters staged a deadly assault in the U.S. Capitol in an effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election — Monday's activities in Congress are expected to be largely uneventful.

While Washington is on high alert for what's expected to be one of the largest snowstorms in recent years, lawmakers are expected to still show up. Here's what you need to know:

What is Congress's role in the certification of the 2024 election?

Congress has to meet Monday in a joint session to unseal the electoral vote records from each state. The process, though largely ceremonial, is mandated by federal law and is a largely somber but relatively quick affair. The sealed votes are escorted across the building and are carried in large mahogany boxes, and the votes are opened and presented in the states' alphabetic order.

As the outgoing president of the Senate, Vice President Kamala Harris will preside over the count and announce Trump's win — marking a significant moment, given that she will oversee the certification of her own loss in November.

Unlike Trump and most congressional Republicans in 2021, Harris and Democrats have widely accepted the results of the 2024 election, so the process is expected to unfold without any major hitches — as it historically had before Jan. 6, 2021.

The vice president's ministerial role in the process was further cemented in 2022 through the Electoral Count Reform and Presidential Transition Improvement Act, which passed Congress with bipartisan support in response to the insurrection, and Trump's efforts to get his vice president, Mike Pence, to object to the results of the election. Pence did not,

correctly saying that the Constitution does not allow the vice president to determine the results of the race.

The 2022 act also raised the threshold necessary for members of Congress to object to a state's electors, raising the requirement to at least one-fifth of the members of both the House and the Senate objecting to the results. Before the 2022 law, objecting to a state's electors requires only one member each from the House and the Senate.

Does the certification have to happen on Jan. 6?

The Electoral Count Act requires that Congress meet on Jan. 6 in a joint session to certify the results of the election. Per language in the Act, Congress shall be in session "on the sixth day of January succeeding every meeting of the electors." The law even states at what time lawmakers have to convene: Both chambers will meet on the House floor at 1 p.m. Eastern.

To change this date in case of, say, a massive snowstorm, Congress would have to pass a law rescheduling the joint session.

"Congress has often changed the date of counting electoral votes in the past, when January 6 fell on a Sunday or for other matters of convenience. The date is not fixed by the Constitution but chosen by Congress and can easily be moved," said Derek Muller, a law professor at the University of Notre Dame.

Congress has changed the date of the certification a few times when Jan. 6 fell on an inconvenient day — as it did in 2013 because Jan. 6 landed on a Sunday that year. That year, Congress quickly passed a law moving the certification of Barack Obama's reelection date to Jan. 4, 2013.

But lawmakers have shown no interest in changing the date because of the snow. House Speaker Mike Johnson's (R-Louisiana) office on Sunday told The Washington Post that certification events will continue as scheduled.

"The House intends to certify President Trump's election tomorrow as scheduled in accordance with federal law," said Johnson spokesman Taylor Haulsee.

In addition, the House and Senate adopted a concurrent resolution last week "to provide for the counting on January 6, 2025, of the electoral votes for President and Vice President of the United States."

Could the blizzard cause a delay?

Lawmakers appear pretty confident they will gather Monday to certify the results, as made clear by the statement from Johnson's office.

Even if the blizzard delayed some members' flights, the House doesn't need full attendance to count the votes. In 2013, a sparse room of lawmakers witnessed the certification of Obama's win.

Lawmakers could still vote to reschedule this year's certification for a later date if they wanted to — but that would still require a vote on Monday, meaning they would have to show up to the Capitol anyway.

What happens after the results are certified?

Once the vote has been certified, Trump will be inaugurated on Jan. 20, as established by the 20th Amendment. Inauguration is held on the west front of the Capitol.

Perhaps a consideration lawmakers are taking as they prepare to head into work on a snowy Monday is that former president Jimmy Carter's remains are scheduled to lie in state in the Capitol from Tuesday to Thursday. Any delays to a Jan. 6 certification could cut into services for Carter.

Are there increased security measures this year?

Yes, in response to Jan. 6, 2021. Security fences surround the Capitol's perimeter, and local and federal law enforcement agencies have been placed on full alert, as The Washington Post reported. Capitol Police officers are staying in hotels near the complex on Sunday night to ensure they can report for duty Monday. Five hundred soldiers with the D.C. National Guard stand ready to assist if called.

Colby Itkowitz, Marianna Sotomayor and Paul Kane contributed to this report.