

YVONNE: Yesterday ... lawmakers gathered for a joint session to count Electoral College votes.

RON: The debate over Arizona's votes had just started. Republican Congressman Paul Gosar was on the mic when nearby rioters breached the Capitol.

(audio of that from The Hill - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kw45gFYpt04>)

YVONNE: As the events developed ... we reached out to members of our Arizona delegation. We wanted to know where they were when rioters breached the Capitol. How it felt. What they were thinking afterward.

RON: I'm Ronald J. Hansen, a national political reporter for The Arizona Republic and azcentral.com.

YVONNE: And I'm Yvonne Wingett Sanchez. I'm also a national political reporter for The Republic.

RON: In today's bonus episode of The Gaggle ... an Arizona politics podcast ... we're bringing you five of those conversations. First, you'll hear from Representative Tom O'Halleran ... a Democrat ... who Yvonne spoke to on Thursday. Then you'll hear from three other Democrats who we spoke to on Wednesday night ... Representatives Ruben Gallego, Greg Stanton and Raul Grijalva.

YVONNE: Then you'll hear from Republican Representative Debbie Lesko. Lesko was in her office when the Capitol was breached. She started texting her fellow representatives afterward, unsure of their safety. Ron spoke to her Wednesday night.

RON: These conversations have been lightly edited for clarity. Here is Yvonne's conversation with Representative O'Halleran. Keep in mind as you listen to this interview that O'Halleran worked as a police officer before entering into politics. That means he's better prepared for such situations as the one he face on Wednesday.

O'HALLERAN CONVERSATION

Yvonne: [00:00:59] So can you just sort of walk me through what this experience was like? [00:01:03][3.8]

O'Halleran: [00:01:05] I would imagine, other than veterans and other police officers, my experience with this stuff is a little bit different than the normal congressperson. So I had faith in our our police department not knowing that we were so overwhelmed with the manpower issues, but faith in them that get us out of there safely. There was a higher level of anxiety in the room. Myself and others tried to calm things down. I think the best way to members would come up and say, what do you think? Because they know our background. But,

you know, the people kept their calm. We were informed on a constant basis. It took a little longer than I thought it would have taken to get out of there. But we were kept very well informed. I think the anxiety level went up a little bit when gas was being used out in Statuary Hall. And we were told to make sure we had our gas masks available and ready for a lot of people that never had a gas mask on before. So Ruben Gallego was making enough to get up and start to explain to people how to use the gas masks. [00:02:22][77.2]

O'Halleran: [00:02:24] And then then they would get on again and say, you know, we are going to be moving you out of this location soon. And they did that. It was orderly, you know, but, you know, it's the ... Certainly you get your head out of that room and you start to look to the left and see that the doors that you normally walk through every day are not only locked, but they're barricaded with furniture and everything like that. And you have to have police officers with their guns drawn. Again, I'm used to it. A lot of people are not used to being in such close quarters. But, you know, the the other you know, then we go down a fairly narrow stairway. Both we were we're trying to make sure calm was calm, prevailed, and it did. And once we got to the room that we were taken to, which was in one of the other buildings, you know, it didn't take long before reinforcements came. And SWAT teams and the whole level of knowledge that we were we were probably going to be safe, get into the environment.

Yvonne: [00:09:14] So where in the chamber, where in the chamber were you when all of this sort of went down in earnest? [00:09:20][6.0]

O'Halleran: [00:09:22] Well, I was ready to get to speak. OK, Ruben and I still had not spoken. Mm hmm. [00:09:28][5.8]

O'Halleran: [00:09:28] And and so who was going to be our our time? So we were probably about I think I was about 15, 20 minutes away from being to speak. So there weren't that many people in the chamber 100 or so because you were going to speak on the issue. You were part of staff or leadership. And the gallery, though, people up in the gallery had a whole different experience because they were they were members. They were sitting in within the space, but they were in much closer proximity to the pounding on the doors because the doors down in the chamber area, for the most part, are of fairly pounding on those doors, you know, that you you really have to do a lot of work to get through to you. But the gallery doors are much more important as far as how people can get in. And there's a lot of them. And there was a lot of work to get those secured. And eventually, as you start to see

people's hands come through and eventually you head to say, OK, that that battle's starting to get lost. [00:10:47][78.6]

Yvonne: [00:10:48] So you saw that work out. [00:10:50][2.2]

[00:10:52] Oh, yeah. Oh, gosh. [00:10:52][0.8]

O'Halleran: [00:10:53] And then you saw that everybody in the gallery was asked to get down before their seats and many of them had to had to crawl over to the far, far exit of the room. [00:11:07][13.5]

O'Halleran: [00:11:09] That would be to the. What corner is that to the south western corner of the room from the gallery to get out and of course, where the press was up there also, and then get get out of the situation, they were all in, but the amount of noise just increased and increased and increased. [00:11:33][24.1]

Yvonne: [00:11:34] So you you got down on the floor. [00:11:38][3.1]

O'Halleran: [00:11:39] No, not we were the gallery people had to get down because they were fearful up there that if they broke through, the members could be hurt easily. [00:11:49][9.6]

O'Halleran: [00:11:50] OK, so down to the main floor, we were told basically that if they started to if they obviously started to harm people, you needed to get down and out of the line of fire, kind of the ability to get hurt badly, quickly. OK. And they you know, they were come. More and more police were coming into the area, but still not enough to cover that expanse with a number of entrances and exits. [00:12:23][33.5]

Yvonne: [00:12:24] And so what is happening? Who are you talking to as all this is playing out? And I mean, I've seen a couple of photos of Congressman Gallego standing on a desk, handing out the the masks. [00:12:37][12.5]

Yvonne: [00:12:37] I mean, what walk me through that. [00:12:39][2.0]

O'Halleran: [00:12:41] I mean, Ruben got right to it. [00:12:44][2.4]

O'Halleran: [00:12:44] You know, he started his first thing was to calm people down. The second thing was to make sure that people that I can't ever remember being trained on how to use those masks and those particular type of masks. [00:12:58][14.1]

O'Halleran: [00:12:59] And I'm sure if you've never had a gas mask on and so there was a lot of questions. He was up there explaining things

I was trying to explain to people, you know, stay calm. Some of them said, what, what what's going to happen when I use this? They said, well, first of all, you might never have to use it. But if you do, you know, just as Ruben was saying to people in the larger scale, you know, stay calm, don't breathe too fast, things like that, which you do not want to do with those gas and gas type masks. And so I thought I thought Ruben did an outstanding job of taking over that part of the situation. And there were other members that had military or police experience that were trained to do the same thing is just calm down. [00:13:48][48.5]

keep your composure better off you were going to be. [00:14:25][10.4]

Yvonne: [00:15:12] And who went colleagues were you speaking with or were you kind of OK? [00:15:17][4.5]

O'Halleran: [00:15:18] I'm not going to mention their names, but, you know, there are a number of that back in that section of the room that, you know, I even went to a point where I just sat down and across my legs and looked at my phone and just kept every once in a while looking around, see, people were OK, because, you know, if they're coming to you for advice, then you don't want to be the one that looks like you're in a panic. Ruben was up there doing the appropriate thing. But, you know, I couldn't be going front of people. And while he was talking and trying to do that, my job was to look at people, OK, what's going on? Even if they would come to me, which they did, because most people know everybody's background, they say, what do you think of this? And you calm them down. [00:16:06][48.8]

O'Halleran: [00:16:07] And for the most part that occurred,

Yvonne: [00:18:00] Did the did you wake up feeling or thinking something differently about kind of the state of, of our nation. [00:18:07][6.7]

O'Halleran: [00:18:09] I was very sad, you know, I said because of the situation. I was sad that people are put at risk like that. I was sad that to find out that the National Guard had been denied in the first place, I was I was both sad and really upset about that. [00:18:30][21.3]

O'Halleran: [00:18:31] And it's we're supposed to be protecting our fellow citizens and not causing them to be at higher and higher risk. I was happy that eventually Vice President Pence did allow the National Guard to come in, but that was too late for the disruption that occurred within the chambers and within the Capitol itself. But

it still happens, at least in people who are safer. It was a. I was upset that I find out that people are being told that they're that there, that there was a need to understand that this was a stolen election. And I know the reality is in that room later on, the votes were overwhelming that the election was held responsibly. And when I got up and talking to some folks, we have to start understanding that you have to tell the truth to the American people, the American people. We need to respect one another. We need to have truth told the American people. We have to make hard decisions sometimes that some American people won't agree with. But you got to get over this whole thing that everybody everything is about politics. And I think for the most part, by the end of the evening, you know, when you get to see the vote totals and in the senate, you know, ninety, ninety three or ninety two to whatever is left of or you see the vote totals in the House, which was. I don't know if it was a super majority or not, I know it was close to super majorities in favor of not allowing these votes to be pushed aside. And if so, that bipartisan sentiment was great. But people have been deluged for weeks since this election with the fact that has been stolen. And we have a very great concern with people's faith in their government and we have a long road to go down. And, you know, I think a lot of what we have to do now is, is to make sure that our enemies from abroad and our allies from abroad and the people of America, that we are a stable government and we need to move forward as that and we will be better off. [00:21:06][154.7]

(MUSICAL TRANSITION)

RON: NOW YOU'LL HEAR FROM REPRESENTATIVE GALLEGO. AS YOU LISTEN ... KEEP IN MIND THAT GALLEGO SERVED WITH THE MARINES DURING THE IRAQ WAR. LIKE O'HALLERAN, THIS MEANT HE HAD SOME EXPERIENCE THAT COULD HELP HIM DURING RIOTS LIKE THE ONE THIS WEEK.

GALLEGO CONVERSATION

Gallego: *[00:00:05]* And then after a little more, we start to hear pounding on the door and then security so that they deployed tear gas and they wanted everyone to get their gas masks ready. So, of course, we started opening up the gas mask containers. I was kind of giving directions to some of these people then. Actually, it looked like we were going to get overrun, so they started evacuating people from the floor and eventually they moved to a secure location after running, not running, but getting us through the hallway. And as I left for my shoulder, I saw the crowd that was actually trying to break through the speakers lobby. They were it was clearly a mob and they were moving like a mob. *[00:00:57][51.7]*

Ron: [00:01:00] The the the sounds and the presence of these rioters, could you see them, was it only audible? Could you hear the sound ...? [00:01:11][11.2]

Gallego: [00:01:12] On my way out, I was the last member to leave the floor. So I want to make sure when I got out, I took a picture of them, actually.

Ron: Yeah, I saw that. [00:01:20][8.3]

Gallego: [00:01:21] And you can hear the pounding on the door. Mm hmm. [00:01:24][2.1]

Ron: [00:01:26] You obviously have seen what a true war zone is like. Compare what happened today to like other dangerous situations. [00:01:34][8.1]

Gallego: [00:01:39] You know, there's nothing scarier than a mob. There it gets his own mentality and it gets momentum, it can be extremely dangerous, becomes a hive mind. And I felt. You know, that if they had broken through that other security because there were still so many members left. That they were going to have to. I thought they were going to have to shoot them, to be honest. And. [00:02:06][27.2]

Gallego: [00:02:09] And so was it was it scary? Look, it's different than combat when people are actually shooting at you, but, you know, this was scarier in the sense that there is nobody there's too many people there that that just weren't trained. Right. All these members of Congress are the Marines I served with. I knew I could trust in a bad situation. And so in that regard, it's not that I was scared for myself, but I was scared for that.. [00:02:35][26.5]

Ron: [00:02:40] Right. The evacuation, was it orderly, did it seem to be like according to what should have been good practice or was it just, you know, get out? [00:02:50][10.7]

Gallego: [00:02:51] They need they need to figure out. They need to move us. They just the way that they did it was not as great in terms of communication and it caused some of this panic. [00:03:00][9.7]

Ron: [00:03:04] The just the whole defense of the capital area itself, do you have a sense at this point as to the performance of the Capitol Police or any of the other law enforcement? ,

Gallego: Right now or then?

Ron: well, you know, your sense now of how they handled the whole day, was this avoidable? [00:03:22][17.5]

Gallego: [00:03:23] It was avoidable. The the defenses that they had were were slim. And I was surprised when I walked out because I noticed that there was no higher barriers to manpower wasn't increased. There was just nothing there. And. You know, my fiancee wanted to come this week, and I told her not like something was going to happen and I guess I was right. Right. [00:03:50][27.4]

(MUSICAL INTERLUDE)

YVONNE: THE NEXT PERSON YOU'LL HEAR FROM IS REPRESENTATIVE GREG STANTON.

STANTON CONVERSATION

Yvonne: [00:00:36] So I am just really looking for a firsthand account of sort of how this played out from your vantage point and then your reaction to all this. [00:00:46][10.0]

Stanton: [00:00:49] OK, I guess I'll start with a vantage point, because, you know, Arizona was the first state that was challenged. So our delegation was on the House floor when when we were first told that there had been a breach of the Capitol by the Capitol Police, you know, Gosar Congressman Gosar was just kind of finishing up. [00:01:09][19.8]

Stanton: [00:01:09] I was next up. I was going to be the next speaker defending to the voters in Arizona and opposing his objection to the selection of our of our electors. And so there was a short break that we recess and the leadership was taken by their security details. We continued, though, for a short while until it became apparent that the breach was going to reach the Capitol. We heard banging on the door so that they locked the doors. But but we heard people banging on the on the on the doors. So at that point, they said, we are adjourning again. And then the Capitol Police instructed us at one point. [00:01:51][41.8]

Stanton: [00:01:51] So they instructed us that we should probably get down on the ground and try to even get below our chairs if we if we can. And then they did instruct us to get out the gas masks because they were utilizing gas on some of the protesters. [00:02:07][16.7]

Yvonne: [00:02:09] So let me stop you there.

Stanton: I should say rioters. [00:02:10][1.9]

Yvonne: [00:02:11] I'm sorry, but let me stop you. [00:02:13][1.6]

Yvonne: [00:02:13] So at this point, where were where were you standing or where? [00:02:17][3.9]

Stanton: [00:02:17] I was in the middle of the capitol behind or right by one of the podiums, I was putting it up and get my little by five minute talk about which I'm going to give later on today. We're going to the floor anyway. So I was right in the middle of the Capitol. I would say, you know, like the middle of it. And if people realize how small the cube of the House floor actually is, you know, so I was in the middle of the House floor behind one of the podiums about to get up and give my talk about why I was defending the voters of Arizona. And we heard the banging on the doors and instructed to get out the gas masks and then ultimately said we had to get out of there. And by the time we got out of there, we were told that they were the rioters were pretty close behind us. [00:03:00][43.3]

Yvonne: [00:03:01] So I think the cameras were really only capturing who was speaking at the time. So how far away or kind of how far away where we're from? [00:03:10][8.8]

Stanton: [00:03:11] I was probably 20 feet from Gosar, OK, and very close. [00:03:15][4.4]

Yvonne: [00:03:16] When they said to get the gas masks.

Stanton: Those are lower. [00:03:20][4.1]

Stanton: [00:03:21] They're below our chair. So every seat in the on the House floor has a as a little container that has a gas mask in it no matter where you're at. [00:03:30][9.1]

Yvonne: [00:03:30] So it didn't matter like it wasn't assigned to you. It was just wherever you are. Right, exactly. It has one. OK, and then what did the what did the pounding on the door sound like? [00:03:39][8.8]

Stanton: [00:03:40] I mean, people that were jammed their way in. So it was clear that these that the that they had breached the Capitol. We had heard that they had breached the Capitol building, but we didn't know where they were or anything like that. I know some people were able to follow it on, I guess, social media. But since I was

next up to speak, I wasn't following on social media.

[00:04:00][20.2]

Stanton: [00:04:00] I was getting ready to deliver my remarks. But obviously we were told by Capitol Police that there had been a breach. They thought they could handle it, but I they thought they could handle it first, because we did continue with the business of the House of Representatives for about two or three more minutes. Then we started hearing the banging and that's when they they said it was time for us to leave. [00:04:19][19.0]

Yvonne: [00:04:20] And what were you thinking as all of this is is going on? Are you thinking I'm going to get my my what I have to say out and then leave? Are you afraid? Are you like, what's going through your mind? Are you texting your wife? [00:04:33][12.5]

Stanton: [00:04:35] Not at that point. [00:04:35][0.4]

Stanton: [00:04:36] Look, honestly, at that point, myself and probably most of the other members on the House floor were not aware of the size of the breach, the number of people that had successfully breached the the Capitol, obviously, when the Capitol Police first they had the leadership was escorted out. Yeah. So at that point, you get a sense, obviously, this is escalating into a much more serious situation. Obviously, when they asked to get out the gas masks and be prepared because they made these tear gas to to quell the riot, you know, that sends another signal. And then when you hear the banging on the doors, they're trying to get in. Obviously, at that point, you realize just how serious this issue is. And I was certainly glad at that point that they decided that we needed to evacuate and get to a secure location. [00:05:24][48.1]

Yvonne: [00:05:25] And what were you thinking? What emotion were you feeling? [00:05:29][4.0]

Stanton: [00:05:32] Well, you know, look, your adrenaline is certainly is pumping, I'm looking around to make sure my people that I know are able to get out of there as well. So I was a little bit away from Congressman Grijalva and some of the others. And I want to make sure that they had a chance to get out ahead of me. So you're looking around and seeing what is there anything I can do to be helpful, anything I do to help the situation? But ultimately, you know, the Capitol Police are in charge at that point. They need to follow the instructions of the Capitol Police. [00:06:01][29.0]

Yvonne: [00:06:02] OK, and then what happened? [00:06:04][1.7]

Stanton: [00:06:05] What was a scary moment? Yes, of course. It was a scary moment. [00:06:09][4.1]

Stanton: [00:06:10] OK, so you go to a secure place way as we were. [00:06:14][4.0]

Stanton: [00:06:14] As we were as I was still on the House floor, but just about to leave the House floor because, you know, there was a large number of people trying to get out into a relatively small space. So it took a little bit of time to get out the House floor. That's when I heard reports of shots fired. I wasn't I didn't hear any shots, but I heard some individuals talking about the fact that there had been shots fired. OK. Obviously, sadly, that turned out to be true. [00:06:40][25.2]

Yvonne: [00:06:41] OK. All right. [00:06:43][2.2]

Stanton: [00:06:44] And then apparently where the where the shots fired occurred was fairly close to where the House floor is. [00:06:50][6.7]

Yvonne: [00:06:52] Jeez. And then did you guys just watch this or monitor this from your secure location? [00:06:56][4.4]

Stanton: [00:06:58] Yes, so we were we were taken to a secure location myself, members of Congress and staff, and, you know, literally I'm in my office right now, but I was in that secure location for hours while they want to make sure that everything was safe and clear everything out and those people have their cell phones or whatever. So people were monitoring the news or, you know, obviously, in my case, talking to my family, lots of people, obviously, you're hearing about this. So they're sending well wishes. And then also we want to monitor what's going on. And we wanted to put out a statement letting people know that that I that I was safe. [00:07:33][34.6]

Yvonne: [00:07:33] OK, OK. And I mean, what's your reaction to all of this? [00:07:38][5.1]

Stanton: [00:07:42] I'm shocked and angered. I mean, look, there's a direct line between President Trump's rhetoric and what happened in the United States Capitol. There's a direct line between his encouragement of this type of behavior and what what occurred. So I'm really I'm I'm angry that that it's such a dangerous situation occurred because of a direct line between his rhetoric. And that's why I'm very angry about it. And it was completely unnecessary,

completely unneeded. And if if the purpose of the violence was to try to stop the United States Congress from doing our business, I'm you know, I'm I'm going to go to the House floor in just a few minutes and deliver the very remarks, maybe a few edits, but deliver deliver those remarks, deliver remarks that I was going to give before they started. So. So in terms of accomplishing any goal of stopping the United States Congress from doing our business, they'll have completely failed in that regard. [00:08:42][60.3]

Yvonne: [00:08:43] OK. OK, is there anything else you'd like to add? [00:08:47][4.3]

Stanton: [00:08:52] No, I guess it's still kind of grappling with myself having to go through such a such a scary, scary moment. [00:09:02][9.7]

Stanton: [00:09:02] But this should not happen in the United States of America. [00:09:05][2.9]

(musical transition)

YVONNE: HERE'S RON'S CONVERSATION WITH REPRESENTATIVE RAUL GRIJALVA.

Ron: [00:00:11] Yeah, so I saw your your speech that you gave on that and then Paul Gosar was in the middle of his. And, you know, that's when it just seemed like everything kind of went crazy on us. We're. [00:00:30][18.3]

Grijalva: [00:00:31] Banging on the doors. And then we were advised to the Capitol, the rotunda had been breached and that they were heading to the floor and to other offices. And that's when they started to organize us to get out. And they did pass out gas masks, you know, I think these people did. And here we are, you know, so they try to go back sometime tonight and finish it today, you know? Yeah. [00:01:04][32.9]

Ron: [00:01:06] So you are you've been there a while. You never have you seen anything that even begins to compare. [00:01:14][8.1]

Grijalva: [00:01:15] You know, you had 60,000 march for comprehensive immigration reform before, you know, nothing. And the arrests that did happened were nonviolent and voluntary. I mean, you know, I and others chose to be arrested, but it wasn't no violence and no in ways that you've seen the other demonstrations, no violence. OK, and and here today, you know, stirred on by the president of the United States, it was seen as though it was something else tonight.

Ron: [00:03:25] Yeah. So where were you when all of this started to happen? Were you still in the House chamber? Were you out in the hallways or in your office? [00:03:33][8.5]

Grijalva: [00:03:34] You know, because I was there, of close, you know, toward the end of our time. Mm hmm. I was going to close, you know, OK. And so then it was going to be Stanton was up next from our side right there. Mr. O'Halleran. OK. Then Mr. Gallego. And then between Steny Hoyer and in between there, we had given time to Liz Cheney and another Republican, Roy and they were going to speak as well. And then when that was done, after Hoyer, I was going to get up and close. [00:04:11][36.7]

Ron: [00:04:14] Was that based on your seniority or was that based on your seniority and home state? [00:04:20][6.3]

Grijalva: [00:04:22] Because I'm the dean of the delegation, right? That's right. Yeah. The polite way of saying it. But there you go. Different. [00:04:33][11.4]

Ron: [00:04:38] Did you did you all feel like you were in any danger at any point, or was it just disconcerting or? [00:04:43][5.4]

Grijalva: [00:04:47] When they passed out the gas masks and when this rush to get us out and I get. [00:04:50][3.5]

Grijalva: [00:04:53] But I came back and I got to the restroom and I got back in, they were barricading the doors with furniture, OK? And I said and so they said, get in, get in the chamber. Members of the Capitol Police would be in there. And I just come back in. They were already being escorted out. I was the last members to leave. Right. And so I was behind and the the Capitol Police were kind enough to put me in those roller chairs and put me down the hall as fast as ever. But I think I got I think if there's any point where you become concerned, for lack of a better word, if is the passage of the gas mask. The pounding on the doors. And the frenzy it created with law enforcement to get us out and to protect. [00:05:44][51.4]

Ron: [00:05:45] And you could hear the pounding on the doors? [00:05:46][1.5]

Grijalva: [00:05:47] Yeah. [00:05:48][1.0]

Ron: [00:05:53] Yeah. What about the others from Arizona? Was there any reaction from any of them, Gosar or Biggs or anybody like that that you recall? [00:06:01][7.8]

Grijalva: [00:06:02] You know, everybody just had to get out, and regardless of where everybody stood on this position, that the fundamental issue is that everybody, you know, were concerned for themselves and for the people that were in the chamber. And I would include them as well. I mean, they look scared. [00:06:20][18.0]

(MUSICAL TRANSITION)

RON: AND FINALLY ... HERE IS MY CONVERSATION WITH REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE LESKO.

LESKO CONVERSATION:

Lesko: [00:00:00] I knew that the Capitol Police had a plan to keep us safe. But at that time I was like, OK, once we're done voting and if there's a whole bunch of protesters everywhere, we need safe transport to back to where we live in D.C. so that we can go to our D.C. home. That was my emphasis at the time because I knew this was a powder keg ready to explode. [00:00:23][23.3]

Ron: [00:00:25] So let's talk about that for just a minute, like what gave you the sense that this was a powder keg at this point? Was it anything that you saw or was it just the general feeling that you had been picking up or ... ? [00:00:38][12.2]

Lesko: [00:00:39] Well, it was a combination of people emailing me, calling me, messaging Twitter with a lot of disinformation out there. A lot of people really believe that what was going to happen today is that Biden electors were totally going to be overturned and Trump was going to stay in office. So I was trying to explain the process to people. And so we sent out a mass email. I told my staff we need to start educating my constituents on how this process work because there were so many theories of what was going to happen and many of them were inaccurate, some very good people, you know, some people I've known for years, just thought that the process was totally different. For example, people thought that each state had a vote and that there were more Republican states than Democrat states and therefore it was going to Trump was going to stay in office. Other people really believe that the vice president was able to just decide after they heard debate. And this was coming from very rational people, some people that I've known for years. [00:02:07][87.6]

Lesko: [00:02:07] And so I knew that this was going to cause a real problem when people well, I thought it was going to wait, quite frankly, till people the likelihood of, you know, overturning the electors was almost zero because the Democrats controlled the House.

And I don't think people realize that. And so that's why I texted people. I, we put it out on social media. I did a mass email trying to explain the process. And unfortunately, I think Twitter and other social media forms, the people are just doing all kinds of things that are inaccurate. [00:02:52][44.1]

Ron: [00:02:52] Yeah. Let's talk about what happened today. I think I saw you in the chamber at the time when this started to go nuts. Is that the case or was someone else or where were you when this kind of really went crazy? [00:03:08][15.5]

Lesko: [00:03:10] I was not in the chamber. I was intending to go to the chamber and I was walking that way, and then I my staff told me that Speaker Pelosi was only allowing the members on the floor that were intending to speak and I was not intending to speak. And so I went back to my office and was watching it on my TV, watching the debate very closely, taking notes. And all of a sudden I just. Well, first of all, we were getting all kinds of alerts on our cell phones from first the Madison office buildings in the Cannon Office Building was being evacuated and people were being told to come over to another office building. And I mean, all kinds of alerts were going on in. And so I'm like trying to listen to the debate. While my phone is going off my cell phone with all kinds of alerts. And then I was watching the floor and saw people scrambling, like somebody yelled out, I couldn't hear what it said and people were scrambling. [00:04:21][71.4]

Lesko: [00:04:22] And I ran to the other room. I really did. And I said to my chief, "What just happened?" Something is happening and nobody really knew what was happening. We later found out that some protester got in, I guess, on the balcony and yelled something and then they started evacuating people and all went downhill from there. [00:04:45][22.8]

Ron: [00:04:45] Yeah. Did you feel unsafe or did it just feel like chaotic or how dangerous did it seem? [00:04:51][6.0]

Lesko: [00:04:53] I definitely feel unsafe, definitely. And I said that I actually was on a media interview last night, a local Arizona media interview last night. And I said, I am very concerned for my safety and the safety of the members of Congress and the senators, because if the reports are that, you know, hundreds of thousands of people are going to come here and descend on Washington, D.C., and I knew how much misinformation is out there based on just the people that contacted me, people that I know that are normally very, you know, calm people. And so I knew that this was a powder keg. And

that's why I brought it up to leadership in actually a conference meeting that we had yesterday. Saying we got please come up with a plan. Yeah. How to keep us safe. Yeah. You know, but I have to say, I imagine most of the people, the vast majority of the people I would assume I don't know, I'm not out there of these people milling around in in Washington, D.C. are peaceful people. But then, of course, you have all of these people breaking in windows and going up the stairs of the Capitol. Those obviously are not peaceful. [00:06:19][85.8]

Ron: [00:06:19] Yeah. How close do you think that you really were to something that was getting out of hand? [00:06:26][6.4]

Lesko: [00:06:28] I personally was not close. [00:06:29][1.5]

Lesko: [00:06:30] OK, I saw I saw that Andy Biggs and Gosar were on the floor, right? I saw that Ruben Gallego and I think Raul Grijalva over on the floor. And then, of course, you know, those are just the ones from Arizona. So I was watching and I saw them. So I was concerned about him. I even I even texted Kyrsten Sinema and asked, "Are you safe?" You know, because, you know, I didn't know if everybody was safe and what was happening. I mean, this is this. And then when some of the media, some of the TV media start saying stuff like, where are you? You know, they're interviewing members. And I go, where are you? Are you in the tunnel? You know, to the house? And I was like, stop telling people about how to get to different places. But it's because this could you don't know what what to expect. Yeah. I mean, when that when the Capitol Police tells us to stay away from our window, then you get a little worried. [00:07:35][65.0]

****music comes back in****

YVONNE: That's all for today's episode of The Gaggle. Keep following our coverage of yesterday's insurrection at azcentral.com. We'll have more information there.

RON: And stay tuned for more from The Gaggle. In next week's episode, we'll look at what Wednesday's Pro-Trump mob means for Arizona and Arizona's Republican Party.

YVONNE: If you're interested in finding me on Twitter, I'm at [yvonne_wingett](https://twitter.com/yvonne_wingett).

RON: And I'm Ronald J. Hansen. That's h-a-n-s-e-n.

YVONNE: Today's bonus episode was produced by Katie O'Connell with help from Maritza Dominguez. Thanks so much for listening. We'll be back next week with more.