

# [***First 7 jurors are chosen for Trump's hush money criminal trial; 11 more still needed***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BTD-39X1-JC5B-G39H-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

NEW YORK — The first seven jurors for Donald Trump's [*hush money trial*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-hush-money-trial-jury-selection-8da8759352478be8effd3d5734aae35e) were seated Tuesday after lawyers grilled the jury pool about their social media posts, political views and personal lives to decide who can sit in fair judgment of the former president.

The panelists who were selected are an information technology worker, an English teacher, an oncology nurse, a sales professional, a software engineer and two lawyers.

Eleven more people still must be sworn in before opening statements begin as early as next week in the [*first criminal trial of a former commander in chief*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-hush-money-criminal-trial-manhattan-1afaeefc09b1d4c152b0bf6e8242d72b). It's a moment of reckoning for Trump, who has tried to put off his prosecutions until after the November election and casts himself as the victim of a politically motivated justice system.

The trial puts Trump’s legal problems at the center of his closely contested race against President Joe Biden. [*It’s the first of Trump’s four criminal cases*](https://projects.apnews.com/features/2023/trump-investigations-civil-criminal-tracker/index.html) to reach trial, and it may be the only one to return a verdict before voters decide whether to elect the [*presumptive GOP presidential nominee*](https://apnews.com/article/president-nominee-trump-election-republican-22a0c2f1e0494925c16c1b633153b67c).

The methodical process unfolding in the Manhattan courtroom highlights the challenge of finding people who can fairly judge the polarizing defendant in the city where he built his real estate empire before being elected president in 2016. Even so, jury selection moved more quickly than expected Tuesday afternoon. It was set to resume Thursday.

On his way out of the courthouse, Trump stopped in the hallway to rail against the case to reporters, accusing the judge of “rushing” the trial.

“We are going to continue our fight against this judge,” said Trump, who pushed unsuccessfully to have the judge removed from the case.

Over two days, dozens of potential jurors have been excused after saying they could not be impartial or because they had other commitments. Trump's lawyers challenged a handful of people over social media posts, and one person was dismissed over a 2017 post about Trump that said “Lock him up!”

Several would-be jurors told the judge they believed they could decide the case fairly, no matter their feelings about Trump or his policies as president.

Trump looked on in the courtroom as his lawyers urged the judge to remove one potential juror for a social media post she made after his 2020 election loss. The judge admonished Trump at one point after he spoke loudly and gestured while the judge questioned the woman about her post.

“I don’t know what he was uttering, but it was audible and he was gesturing. And he was speaking in the direction of the juror,” Judge Juan Merchan said. "I won’t tolerate that. I will not tolerate any jurors being intimidated in this courtroom.”

Prosecutor Joshua Steinglass took Trump's notoriety head-on, telling would-be jurors that attorneys were not looking for people who had been “living under a rock for the past eight years.” They just needed to keep an open mind.

“This case has nothing to do with your personal ***politics*** \u2026 it’s not a referendum on the Trump presidency or a popularity contest or who you’re going to vote for in November. We don’t care. This case is about whether this man broke the law," he said.

Trump has [*pleaded not guilty*](https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-arraignment-hush-money-81225510ef7638494852816878f612f0) to [*34 felony counts*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-indictment-full-document-640043319549?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=RelatedStories&utm_campaign=position_03) of falsifying business records as [*part of an alleged effort*](https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23741707-new-york-v-trump-statement-of-facts) to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus — stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign.

With the trial expected to last for six weeks or more, several jury pool members brought up plans they have for Memorial Day and beyond. One parent was excused Monday because of a child’s wedding in late June. Another person was dismissed Tuesday because of a trip they have planned.

One man was excused after saying he feared his ability to be impartial could be compromised by “unconscious bias” from growing up in Texas and working in finance with people who “intellectually tend to slant Republican.”

“I’m not sure that I can say beyond a reasonable doubt that I can be fair," another potential juror told the judge. “I can try. But I’m not 100% sure I can be fair.” She was also dismissed.

Another woman said she disagrees with Trump’s policies and sometimes finds herself frustrated by him. But she pledged to be fair and impartial, telling defense lawyer Todd Blanche that she would give her “level-headed best” if she were picked for the jury.

“I didn’t sleep last night thinking about could I do that,” she said.

Trump broke into a grin, nodding his head in an exaggerated manner, when another person said he had read two of the former president's books, “The Art of the Deal” and “How to Get Rich." The man, who said some of his wife's family members are lobbyists for the Republican Party, said he didn't think there was anything that would prevent him from looking at the case fairly.

“I feel that no one’s above the law," he said.

The charges center on $130,000 in payments that Trump’s company made to his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He paid that sum on Trump’s behalf to keep [*porn actor Stormy Daniels*](https://apnews.com/article/trump-indictment-stormy-daniels-karen-mcdougal-26f0b7e7cf464f5fc0681e04efe5fe9b) from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied the encounter ever happened.

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees. The prosecution has described the money as being part of a scheme to bury damaging stories Trump feared could help his opponent in the 2016 race, particularly as Trump’s reputation was suffering at the time from comments [*he made about women*](https://apnews.com/arts-and-entertainment-events-united-states-presidential-election-television-5906910b70224c62b8013100d8749d3e).

Trump has acknowledged reimbursing Cohen for the payment and that it was designed to stop Daniels from going public about the alleged encounter. But Trump has said it had nothing to do with the campaign. He hinted Tuesday at the defense his legal team will mount, telling reporters, “I was paying a lawyer and marked it down as a legal expense."

“That’s exactly what it was. And you get indicted over that?" Trump said.

In court papers also filed Tuesday, prosecutors urged the judge to fine Trump $3,000 over social media posts they say violated a gag order limiting what he can say publicly about witnesses. In the posts, Trump called Cohen and Daniels “two sleaze bags who have, with their lies and misrepresentations, cost our Country dearly!”

Prosecutors wrote that the judge should admonish Trump to comply with the gag order and warn him that further violations could be punished not only with additional fines but also jail time.

If convicted of falsifying business records, Trump faces up to four years in prison, though there’s no guarantee he will get time behind bars.

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Richer reported from Washington. Associated Press reporters Ruth Brown, Philip Marcelo and Jill Colvin in New York contributed.

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