

# [***Opinion: George Santos is one of the few Republicans who finally took things too far***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BCJ-4C71-DY7V-G047-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Disgraced former New York congressman George Santos just won't go away.

After being expelled from the House of Representatives last year following a series of ethical violations including a [*finding*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/george-santos-expulsion-vote-12-1-23/index.html) that he attempted to "fraudulently exploit" his campaign for monetary gain, Santos has been [*negotiating*](https://apnews.com/article/george-santos-fraud-trial-plea-new-york-6ecf3896ae1de466bef442dc0409fc15) with federal prosecutors to avoid going to jail on criminal fraud charges, [*selling gossip*](https://twitter.com/MrSantosNY/status/1735110394220364128) on X (formerly Twitter)and hawking videos on Cameo.

Now, he's [*suing*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/19/business/george-santos-sues-jimmy-kimmel/index.html) Jimmy Kimmel, alleging that Kimmel, using a fake name and profile, bought [*14 of his Cameo videos*](https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/5-things/episodes/b9324012-8efc-11ee-9469-33f465936ada.pdf) and then broadcast some of the content on television for a segment called "[*Will Santos Say It*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/media/2024/02/19/george-santos-suing-jimmy-kimmel-cameo-cnc-foreman-vpx.cnn)," in which he highlighted clips of Santos saying ridiculous things. The comedian, the lawsuit claims, was in violation of the copyright and "for the sole purpose of capitalizing on and ridiculing Plaintiff's gregarious personality." Santos is also suing ABC and Disney, the company and parent company that air "Jimmy Kimmel Live." The suit may have merit, which adds to the irony: Santos, [*the alleged fraudster*](https://www.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/5-things/episodes/b9324012-8efc-11ee-9469-33f465936ada.pdf), is suing Kimmel for fraud.

Given the accusations that got him booted from the House and made him the subject of far-reaching media inquiries - Santos was accused of using campaign funds for [*things like*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/16/politics/takeaways-santos-report-botox-fake-loans/index.html) cosmetic treatments and purchases at Sephora and Only Fans, and is a serial fabulist who seems to have [*lied*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2023/01/19/george-santos-immigration-records-mom-south-tower-serfaty-cnntm-vpx.cnn) about everything from [*his resume*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/26/politics/george-santos-admits-embellishing-resume/index.html) to his mother being [*killed in 9/11*](https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2023/01/19/george-santos-immigration-records-mom-south-tower-serfaty-cnntm-vpx.cnn) - you would think that Santos would slink away in shame. But that would require him to have shame.

Instead, Santos seems to have learned from the best: former President Donald Trump. Santos is not as rich or charismatic as Trump, but he does seem to be aping some of the former president's strategies. Chief among them: dominate the attention economy.

Many who find Trump abhorrent, myself included, notice that the more we hear from the man, the more we are horrified that anyone would want to hear from him. But this is far from a universal response.

For a great many Americans, it seems that Trump's media dominance is a kind of exposure therapy, and when his shocking statements are in the news again and again, they begin to feel less shocking and more normal. And for many of these Americans, Trump made ***politics*** fun and entertaining. The Republican [*Party didn't even publish*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/republicans-no-party-platform-rnc/2020/08/24/a56c057c-e61c-11ea-970a-64c73a1c2392_story.html) a new platform for the last presidential election. Fealty to Trump, the entertainer-in-chief, seemed to be the only rule.

Santos is acting in kind. He lacks the kind of virulent base that Trump enjoys, as well as the political success. But perhaps he realizes that being outrageous garners attention and, in today's GOP, attention - even negative attention - is worth something. Being accused even of serious crimes isn't a deal-breaker for voters or party leaders.

He is [*far*](https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/07/matt-gaetz-women-who-support-abortion)[*from*](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/feb/01/state-of-the-union-matt-gaetz-charles-johnson) the [*only*](https://www.businessinsider.com/lauren-boebert-controversy-scandals-statements-colorado-congresswoman-photos-2023-9#november-2021-boebert-called-rep-ilhan-omar-a-member-of-the-jihad-squad-and-implied-that-she-was-a-terrorist-2)[*person*](https://www.denverpost.com/2021/01/12/lauren-boebert-guns-congress-security-stop/) who seems to [*understand*](https://www.newsweek.com/lauren-boebert-vows-fight-capitol-rioters-jan-6-anniversary-1858449) that [*shocking*](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/magazine/marjorie-taylor-greene.html), [*offensive*](https://newrepublic.com/post/170723/marjorie-taylor-greene-civil-war) and even allegedly [*illegal*](https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2023/07/politics/trump-indictments-criminal-cases/) behavior can be a benefit for Republican politicians. There is no shortage of Republican elected officials and prominent commentators who have not only paid no price for outrageous commentary and behavior, but have in fact seen their stars rise.

Calling the GOP a "[*clown show*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQiZSz1bEDE)" is now practically a cliche - pause and consider that fact - but it's a fitting term. The party is increasingly made up of profoundly unserious, unqualified, unethical people for whom [*chaos*](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/02/26/matt-gaetz-profile) seems to be the ultimate goal.

It's not that American ***politics*** were fully buttoned-up until Trump descended a golden escalator and turned the whole system on its head. But at no point in my lifetime has chaos-making, attention-seeking and offense-giving been so thoroughly rewarded by one of the country's two major parties.

George Santos, whose vacant seat in the House of Representatives was [*filled last week*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/13/politics/santos-seat-tom-suozzi-mazi-pilip/index.html) by Democrat Tom Suozzi, is one of the few Republicans who it seems finally took it too far - or at least took the unethical and possibly criminal bits too far. But he's not slinking away. And why would he? Today's Republican Party seems tailor-made - or, more accurately, Trump-made - exactly for a guy like him.

Opinion by Jill Filipovic

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