

# [***Trump's First Criminal Trial Is Enough to Cost Him the Election | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVR-CT31-JBR6-9007-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** Of course, a criminal trial does not help Trump. And anyone who tries to sell you otherwise should have their head examined. It is simply an absurd and asinine argument.

**Body**

Former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) and his minions throughout the [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Party would have you believe that his criminal trial for falsifying business records to cover up an affair with a porn star, which is starting in earnest this week, is a political benefit to him. In their telling, the trial, which they say is nothing more than "political persecution" and "election interference," is a political gift that will propel Trump to a second term.

Like most things that come from Trumpworld, this could not be further from the truth. Of course, a criminal trial does not help Trump. And anyone who tries to sell you otherwise should have their head examined. It is simply an absurd and asinine argument.

Because despite what Trump might believe, he does not have mythical political powers, he does not defy the laws of political gravity, and he's not made of Teflon. In fact, he is a politician who has never once gotten more votes than his political opponent. Ever. And under his stewardship, the Republican Party has had historic electoral defeats in 2018, 2020, and 2022.

The simple truth is Donald Trump is deeply unpopular and politically weak, and a criminal trial is not going to help that.

Elections are a simple math equation; it is about addition, not subtraction. To win in November, Trump not only needs to keep every single vote he won last time but has to add to his vote tally. Without question, a criminal trial will fire up the MAGA base. They are conditioned to eat up the grievance ***politics*** that Trump serves them daily whole-hog without asking questions or applying logic. But as has been demonstrated in election cycle after election cycle, the MAGA base is not enough to win elections.

And while a trial may fire up his base, it turns off the very voters Trump needs to win.

According to the most recent *New York Times*/Siena [*poll*](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/04/14/us/elections/times-siena-poll-registered-voter-crosstabs.html), nearly 6 in 10 voters believe the charges of hush money payments made to a porn star are serious, including 54 percent of Independents. And the bad news for Trump doesn't end there.

Exit polls during the Republican primary showed that around 30 percent of Republican primary voters would not believe Trump was fit for the presidency if he were convicted of a crime. Even if you assume that 95 percent of those Republican voters eventually come home to Trump—a safe assumption—the 5 percent who may not are more than enough to deliver a second term to President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

In other words, a trial won't help Trump attract any new voters, which he needs, and may cost him a small, but decisive, number of voters that he had in 2020. And that math doesn't add up for Trump and [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

The trial will also put Trump back at the center of the news cycle, sucking up all the other news oxygen. Even without cameras in the courtroom, Trump's trial is going to bring wall-to-wall coverage. And while Trump certainly enjoys being at the center of the media universe, being so now will hurt him.

For the voters who are going to decide the election, seeing Trump's grievance show every day from the courthouse will serve as nothing more than a reminder of why they voted Trump out of office in the first place. Trump saw his poll numbers steadily increase from 2021 to 2023, mostly because the majority of voters were not thinking about him. He was not omnipresent in their lives. Unless you were a religious watcher of cable news, you could go days, if not weeks, without hearing about Trump during that time. A trial will change that. For the first time since he left office, he will dominate the news, providing a constant reminder to voters of how chaotic, dangerous and self-serving the next four years could be.

In addition, standing outside the courthouse ranting about himself makes the election a choice between him and Biden and not a referendum on Biden—something that I'm sure brings a huge smile to the faces of everyone working in the Biden reelection offices in Wilmington.

And the trial comes at a huge opportunity cost for Trump. It takes away the biggest advantage any campaign has—the candidate's time. While Trump has never been an aggressive campaigner and spends more days on the golf course than in battleground states, being trapped in a courtroom four days a week for weeks on end will mean less time in the states that will decide the election.

The contrast and opportunity this hands the Biden campaign could not have been any clearer than it was last week. While Trump was confined in court like a common criminal, Biden spent the week barnstorming across Pennsylvania talking about lowering taxes and bringing manufacturing jobs back to the United States. It's a movie we're likely to see play out over and over again: Trump in court and Biden in battleground states. And since Trump has funneled the vast majority of his campaign resources into his legal defense, he will struggle to make up for his lack of ability to travel with TV ads and other ways to reach voters in the states that will decide the election.

So, no. Up is not down. Bad is not good. The laws of political gravity have not been bent by Donald Trump. And sitting for a criminal trial in the middle of a presidential campaign is not a good thing.

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*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2381590/trumps-trial.jpg)

**Graphic**

Trump's on Trial

Mark Peterson - Pool/Getty Images

Former President Donald Trump sits with his attorney Todd Blanche during his criminal trial as jury selection continues at Manhattan Criminal Court on April 19.

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