

# [***Donald Trump's Legal Week From Hell***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BBW-SGS1-DY68-1003-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** This week saw two new rulings deliver significant blows to the Republican 2024 presidential frontrunner.

**Body**

Donald Trump, the Republican presidential frontrunner, possibly had his worst week since the start of all his legal troubles, which led him to face 91 felony counts in four different criminal trials.

This week, the former president got confirmation that the first of these four trials will go ahead before the November 5 election. He was also hit with a huge fine that is likely to hurt him financially, as well as tarnish his reputation as a businessman.

On Thursday, New York Judge Juan Manuel Merchan ruled that Trump's hush-money trial—related to a payment to adult film star [*Stormy Daniels*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/stormy-daniels?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) ahead of the 2016 election—will go ahead as scheduled on March 25. Merchan rejected Trump's calls for delays and a dismissal. The Republican denies any wrongdoing and has said the trial is part of a political witch hunt aimed at derailing his White House bid.

It was a hugely consequential decision for the judge to leave the date unchanged, especially as other cases involving Trump—specifically, the one that sees him accused of plotting to overturn the 2020 election results—have been frozen or postponed following the former president's appeals.

*Newsweek* contacted Trump's 2024 campaign team and his lawyer [*Alina Habba*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/alina-habba?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s studio for comment by email on Saturday morning.

Trump's trial on charges of plotting to overturn the 2020 election, initially set to begin on March 4, was postponed by U.S. District Judge [*Tanya Chutkan*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/tanya-chutkan?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) earlier this month; the former president's claims of immunity from prosecution are still being evaluated by the courts. The case, which was brought forward by Justice Department special counsel [*Jack Smith*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/jack-smith?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), was not given a new start date.

The hush-money case, where Trump is facing 34 felony counts, is expected to last six weeks, according to Merchan. That means that, if found guilty, Trump could run as a felon in November—the first time in U.S. history that this would happen at a presidential election.

On the same day, Thursday, special counsel David Weiss charged a former [*FBI*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/fbi?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) informant with lying about [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s and [*Hunter Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hunter-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s ties with Ukrainian energy company Burisma Holdings. The informant, Alexander Smirnov, was charged with making a false statement and fabricating fictitious records claiming the president and his son were involved in a multi-billion bribery scheme. The charge is a huge blow to [*Republicans*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republicans?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)' efforts to prosecute the Biden family.

However, Trump's legal problems didn't end on Thursday.

The following day, Judge [*Arthur Engoron*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/arthur-engoron?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), who is overseeing the New York Attorney General Letitia James' civil fraud case against Trump, ordered the former president to pay $355 million in penalties for scheming to inflate the value of his assets with the goal of getting more favorable terms from banks and insurers. The judge, a Democrat, also banned Trump from serving as officer or director of any New York company for three years, while his eldest sons Eric and Donald Jr. were banned for two years.

The fine imposed by Engoron is significant even for someone with deep pockets, especially as Trump was recently ordered to pay [*$83.3 million for defaming writer Jean E. Carroll*](https://www.newsweek.com/why-donald-trump-may-seek-avoid-jury-award-according-biographer-1869222?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) in yet another case. The former president, who has already been found liable for sexually assaulting Carroll in a New York department store in the mid-1990s, was found guilty of defaming her for his 2019 statements denying rape charges and accusing her of being a political operative.

Trump won't have to pay the fine immediately, as an appeal process will follow Engoron's decision, but he could eventually be forced to pay. The former president lashed out against Engoron's ruling, calling him "crooked" and describing his decision as politically motivated. As in the other cases against him, Trump denies wrongdoing.

Trump's niece [*Mary Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/mary-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), a fierce critic of the former president, [*said his "whole world" was imploding this week*](https://twitter.com/MaryLTrump/status/1758593523316642048), calling Engoron's decision "absolutely devastating for Donald."

However, Thomas Gift, founding director of the Centre on U.S. ***Politics*** at University College London, told *Newsweek* that this week's legal blows are unlikely to harm Trump in the polls.

"Trump's legal losses may cost hundreds of millions to his business empire. But in the eyes of voters, they're a dime a dozen," Gift said.

"None of these cases seems to move the needle against Trump, and if anything, simply reinforce his narrative that the judicial system has been 'weaponized' against him," he added. "For any other politician, a story like this one would be a monumental crash-and-burn. For Trump, it's just business as usual."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2350531/donald-trump.jpg)

**Graphic**

Donald Trump

Steven Hirsch-Pool/Getty Images

Republican presidential candidate, former U.S. President Donald Trump attends a pre-trial hearing at Manhattan Criminal Court on February 15, 2024 in New York City.

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