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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Smith asks justices for quick ruling

US files request for top court to decide on Trump immunity

By Mark Sherman and Eric Tucker
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Special counsel Jack Smith on Monday asked the Supreme Court to take up and rule quickly on whether former President Donald Trump can be prosecuted on charges he plotted to overturn the 2020 election results.

Smith made his request for the

court to act with unusual speed to prevent any delays that could push back the trial of the 2024 Republican presidential primary front-runner, currently set to begin on March 4, until after next year's presidential election.

Later Monday, the justices indicated they would decide quickly whether to hear the case, ordering Trump's lawyers to respond by Dec. 20. The court's brief order did not signal what it ultimately would do.

A federal judge ruled the case could go forward, but Trump signaled he would ask the federal appeals court in Washington to reverse that outcome. He also asked U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to freeze the election interference case in its entirety until the appeal was resolved. Smith is attempting to bypass the appeals court, the usual next step in the process, and have the Supreme Court take up the matter directly.

"This case presents a fundamental question at the heart of our democracy: whether a former President is absolutely immune from federal prosecution for crimes committed while in office or is constitutionally protected from federal prosecution when he has been impeached but not convicted before the criminal proceedings begin," prosecutors wrote.

The court is next scheduled to meet privately on Jan. 5, 2024. It's unclear whether the justices

would convene sooner to take up Smith's request.

Trump's presidential campaign criticized Smith for trying to go around the appeals court. "There is absolutely no reason to rush this sham to trial except to injure President Trump and tens of millions of his supporters," the campaign said in a statement.

Underscoring the urgency for prosecutors in securing a quick resolution that can push the case

Turn to Trump, Page 9



Juan Romero stands outside his semitruck parked in the 1500 block of South Western Avenue in Chicago on Dec. 2 before participating in a truck convoy to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines. **JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

"It's beautiful. I'm grateful that people look at a different side of me now and not my background."

— Juan Romero, a participant in a truck convoy to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines

4,000 DAYS OF PRAYER

A man's journey out of Chicago street violence to a trucking convoy honoring the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

By Laura Rodríguez Presa | Chicago Tribune

It's easy to fall back into a life surrounded by gangs, drugs and violence in the streets of Chicago after being released from prison, Juan Romero wrote in an essay from the four walls of his cell as he tried to understand how he landed there and how he could find his way out.

"It's the only way of life we know," said Romero, 36, now a free man.

He was in his early teens when first arrested. It was also then when he held a gun. At 19, he pulled the trigger and at 21, he was sentenced to 13 years in prison for attempted murder.

For a long time, Romero didn't think there was a way out, especially after being convicted. Growing up in Pilsen in the '90s meant that most of his friends, even his family, were intertwined in it. His older brother had been killed on 18th Street.

Solace and clarity came through prayer, he said.

Last week, a little over four years after serving his sentence, he adorned the hood of the semi-truck he drives for work with an image of 'La Guadalupe' — the Virgin Mary — to partake in the annual procession

Turn to Convoy, Page 4

Alleged shooter dismisses attorneys

Crimo will represent himself at trial, set to begin in late February

By Clifford Ward and Chloe Hilles
Chicago Tribune

Alleged Highland Park parade shooter Robert Crimo III dismissed his attorneys Monday and said he planned to represent himself at trial, which is now scheduled for February.

In a surprise move at a Monday case management conference, Crimo's attorneys from the Lake County public defender's office told Judge Victoria Rossetti that the defendant wished to act as his own attorney.

Assistant Public Defender Gregory Ticsay did not say in court what prompted Crimo's decision. His attorneys declined to comment after the hearing.

The judge extensively admonished Crimo about the realities of a defendant presenting a case at trial. Crimo, 23, admitted via questioning that he did not have the background in law, or the experience of a trial lawyer. The judge told Crimo that he could not count on help from the judge, and would not receive any preferential treatment.

"You still want to proceed without an attorney?" Rossetti asked after questioning him.

"Yes, I do," Crimo replied.

The judge then allowed Crimo to proceed, and he almost immediately said he wanted an expedited proceeding based on his right to a speedy trial. Rossetti set Feb. 26 as the trial date.

During the hearing, the judge mentioned that Crimo's attorneys and Lake County prosecutors had met as recently as Dec. 6 to discuss scheduling issues, and had tentatively agreed to a trial date in February 2025.

Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said the prosecutors will be ready for the earlier trial date.

Turn to Crimo, Page 5

Support to block some mail-in votes

The Republican National Committee is backing an appeal in a federal lawsuit seeking to overturn an Illinois law that allows mail-in ballots cast on or before Election Day to be counted up to 14 days afterward. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

Kyiv blocks Russian missile salvo

As Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy heads to Washington to rally Western support, the Russian military targeted Ukraine's capital with the most intense salvo of ballistic missiles in months. **Nation & World**

Prosecutors poised to rest their case in Burke trial



Former Chicago Ald. and FBI mole Daniel Solis leaves the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago with his attorney Lisa Noller on Monday after another day in the corruption trial of former Ald. Edward Burke. **TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Stage set for defense testimony of FBI mole former Ald. Solis

By Jason Meisner, Megan Crepeau and Ray Long
Chicago Tribune

Five years after virtually disappearing into thin air, former Ald. Daniel Solis made a rather public arrival at Chicago's downtown federal courthouse Monday, ready to testify as the most highly anticipated witness in the corruption trial of his onetime colleague, Edward M. Burke.

Solis, whose bombshell cooperation with the FBI altered the trajectory of Chicago's politics, arrived at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse with his lawyer and walked right past a phalanx of news cameras staked

out in the lobby media pit.

As word ricocheted around the courthouse that Solis had entered the building, a knot of federal agents gathering near the back of the courtroom prompted one of Burke's attorneys to complain that it looked like a "SWAT team" and that jurors could get the impression that Solis was "in danger."

But that turned out to be the high point of the day for Solis-watchers, as prosecutors have yet to put the finishing touches on their case.

In a twist, Solis is expected to be called not by prosecutors, but by Burke's own attorneys who are gambling they might limit the damage the wiretaps and other secret recordings made by Solis if they can dirty him up on the witness stand.

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