



Jury finds Donald Trump liable for sexual abuse and defamation in E. Jean Carroll case

Description



McCarthy and Mitch McConnell speak to the media after meeting with President Joe Biden at the White House on May 09. Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy wouldn't say Tuesday if he'd still support former President Donald Trump after a New York jury found him liable for battery and defamation in a civil lawsuit brought by E. Jean Carroll.

"You know what, I've been in this meeting — let me find out what happened," McCarthy, who was leaving an Oval Office meeting with President Joe Biden on the debt ceiling, told reporters at the White House.

In 2019, McCarthy told reporters he believed Trump's account denying Carroll's accusations.

"I've never met her — I understand what the President [Trump] said, though I nothing more about the situation... I know the president said this is not true, I haven't — don't know anything else about it," he told reporters at the time, adding, "Yes, I believe the President."

Meantime, Republican **Sen. Kevin Cramer** described the verdict as a serious issue.

"I'd much rather have a president that doesn't have that history, but at the same time, at some point, there'll be a binary choice, and then we'll make it," Cramer said.

The North Dakota senator said that while the verdict is "not even disqualifying to the American people," it does go to Trump's electability.

"That and several other things cause me to question whether he'd be the best nominee for the party. This is why I haven't endorsed anybody yet. I'm keeping an open mind," he said. "

Sen. Mitt Romney, who has long been critical of the former president, said he hopes the verdict leads people to conclude he isn't fit for office.

"The jury of his peers found him guilty of sexual assault and awarded \$5 million to the person who was damaged. I hope the jury of the American people reach the same conclusion about Donald Trump," the Utah senator said.

Rep. Don Bacon, a moderate Republican who represents a district President Joe Biden won, said Trump "got what he deserved."

"The jury spoke and I respect the jury," he said. "I think he showed a lot of disrespect for the jury and the court... The way he treated them, he got what he deserved."

Bacon has already said he wouldn't support Trump for president in 2024 and added that he thinks the former president is "too divisive" and would not win the White House.

A lawmaker who has endorsed Trump for president, **Rep. Matt Gaetz**, said he doesn't think the verdict "is gonna make much of a difference," in the election.

“I certainly don’t believe that Donald Trump abused anyone,” the Florida lawmaker said.

Asked about some of his Republican colleagues saying they find it hard to see how they could support a presidential candidate who was found liable for battery and defamation, Gaetz said, “I don’t share that view.”

Senate Minority Whip John Thune said that he does not think the ruling will affect the Trump base, but may influence some swing voters.

But, **Sen. John Cornyn** said it’s difficult to assess the political fallout for Trump, in part, because so many voters have strongly defined positions about him.

“People who love him will still support him and people who don’t, won’t. I just think it’s too early to tell what the effect will be if there will be any effect at all,” Cornyn said.

Several senators dismissed the New York legal system and questioned the jury.

Sen. Lindsey Graham simply told reporters, “I think the New York legal system is off the rails when it comes to Donald Trump.”

Former GOP presidential hopeful, **Sen. Marco Rubio**, said, “That jury is a joke, the whole case is a joke.”

Ohio freshman **Sen. JD Vance**, who is a strong supporter of the former president, said he was skeptical of the verdict from jurors in liberal New York City because it “seems obsessed with going after Donald Trump,” he said.

CNN’s Nicky Robertson and Ted Barrett contributed reporting to this post.

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