



Trump trial: Jury selection to resume after possible jurors excused for saying they could not be impartial

## Description

**US : The second day of jury selection in former President Trump's Manhattan criminal trial is expected to begin Tuesday after half of prospective jurors were excused Monday for saying they could not be impartial toward the presumptive Republican nominee.**

Court is expected to begin again for the second day of Trump's trial at 9:30 a.m. and will resume with jury selection.

The trial comes after Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg charged the former president with 34 counts of falsifying business records in the first degree related to alleged hush money payments made before the 2016 presidential election.

Trump pleaded not guilty to all counts last year.

"It's a scam. It's a political witch hunt," Trump said after court adjourned Monday.

Prospective jurors were asked to answer 42 questions from a questionnaire that reviews the individual's work history, political affiliation and what media they chose to watch and listen to.

But more than 50 of the original 96 prospective jurors were excused almost immediately for admitting they could not serve as impartial jurors. Several were excused due to other issues.

New York Judge Juan Merchan is presiding over the trial, despite Trump's request to have him recuse himself due to his alleged hostility toward the former president and due to his daughter's work with Democrat politicians.

Merchan, from the bench on Monday, said there was "no basis" for him to recuse himself.

The judge later addressed the former president directly, telling him that he has a right to be present at the trial each day to assist in his defense.

Merchan warned the former president that if he disrupts proceedings in any way, he would be held in contempt and could be removed from the court. Merchan also said that if Trump is required to appear and fails to do so, a warrant would be issued for his arrest.

Trump did not verbally respond but nodded in agreement with the judge.

The trial is expected to last for approximately six weeks. The court will not meet on Wednesdays and will not meet on Monday, April 29.

After jurors were excused for the day, Merchan rejected a defense request that Trump be excused from the trial next Thursday to attend arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The high court is hearing arguments on April 25 on the issue of presidential immunity and on whether Trump is immune from prosecution in Special Counsel Jack Smith's election interference case.

"Arguing before the Supreme Court is a big deal, and I can certainly appreciate why your client would want to be there, but a trial in New York Supreme Court ... is also a big deal," Merchan said, rebuffing Trump lawyer Todd Blanche's request.

Merchan added, "I will see him here next week."

Trump also requested to attend the high school graduation ceremony for his son, Barron Trump, on May 17. Merchan has not yet decided on whether the former president can be present to celebrate his son.

"It looks like the judge will not let me go to the graduation of my son who's worked very, very hard," Trump said after court adjourned Monday. "He's a great student, and he's very proud of the fact that he did so well and was looking forward for years to have graduation with his mother and father there. And it looks like the judge isn't going to allow me to escape this scam; it's a scam trial."

Meanwhile, Merchan had imposed a gag order on Trump last month due to his "prior extrajudicial statements." Merchan said they established "a sufficient risk to the administration of justice."

Merchan ordered that Trump cannot make or direct others to make public statements about witnesses concerning their potential participation or about counsel in the case — other than Bragg — or about court staff, DA staff or family members of staff.

Merchan also ordered that Trump cannot make or direct others to make public statements about any prospective juror or chosen juror.

In court Monday, prosecutors from Bragg's office argued that Trump had violated his gag order on three separate occasions on social media. Prosecutors said Trump should be fined \$3,000 for the three alleged violations of the gag order — \$1,000 for each violation.

"The defendant is aware of the April 1 order. We know that from various posts he had made," said

prosecutor Christopher Conroy.

“We think it is important for the court to remind Mr. Trump is a criminal defendant,” Conroy added, flagging that Trump might have again violated the gag order Monday morning while attending court.

Blanche argued that the three posts highlighted by prosecutors did not violate the gag order. “He is responding to salacious, repeated, vehement attacks by these witnesses,” Blanche said.

Merchan said he will hear arguments on whether Trump violated the gag order on April 23 at 9:30 a.m.

Bragg, last April, charged Trump with 34 counts of falsifying business records in the first degree. The charges are related to alleged hush money payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign.

The DA alleged that Trump “repeatedly and fraudulently falsified New York business records to conceal criminal conduct that hid damaging information from the voting public during the 2016 presidential election.”

According to New York state law, a charge of falsifying business records in the first degree alleges that the defendant committed a crime of falsifying business records with the intent to defraud. The intent to defraud would be an intent to commit another crime.

In 2019, federal prosecutors in the Southern District of New York investigated the matter and opted not to charge Trump related to the alleged payments made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal.

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