



## Trump Trial Opening Arguments Starting Next Week After Full Jury Selected

### Description

**US : Opening arguments for former President Donald Trump's so-called "hush-money" trial will start next Monday after a full jury and alternates were selected on Friday.**

"We have our full panel," Judge Juan Merchan said in court after the final six alternate jurors were selected. They will serve alongside a panel of 12 jurors.

Reacting on social media, President Trump wrote that the judge is "'railroading' me, at breakneck speed, in order to completely satisfy his 'friends.'"

He also argued that the gag order that was imposed on the judge that prohibits the former president from speaking about certain individuals who are connected to the case is unfair.

"I cannot talk about the most important of topics, including his totally disqualifying conflict of interest, and taking away my constitutional right of free speech," he wrote, [adding the trial is a](#) mere "scam" brought by Democratic District Attorney Alvin Bragg.

The judge said lawyers will present opening statements Monday morning before prosecutors begin laying out their case alleging a scheme to cover up negative stories President Trump feared would hurt his 2016 presidential campaign. He has pleaded not guilty.

Over five days of jury selection, dozens of people were dismissed from the jury pool after saying they didn't believe they could be fair.

Others expressed anxiety about having to decide such a consequential case with outsized media attention, even though the judge has ruled that jurors' names will be known only to prosecutors, President Trump, and their legal teams.

[One woman](#) who had been chosen to serve on the jury was dismissed Thursday after she raised concerns over messages she said she got from friends and family when aspects of her identity became public.

On Friday, another woman broke down in tears while being questioned by a prosecutor about her ability to decide the case based only on evidence presented in court.

“I feel so nervous and anxious right now,” the woman said. “I’m so sorry. I wouldn’t want someone who feels like this to judge my case either. I don’t want to waste the court’s time.”

The case centers on a \$130,000 payment that Michael Cohen, President Trump’s former lawyer, made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, to prevent her claims from becoming public at the end of the 2016 campaign. The former president has denied allegations of an affair that occurred between he and Ms. Clifford in the mid-2000s.

His lawyers also contended that payments to Mr. Cohen were legitimate legal expenses. Nonetheless, he still faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records. He could get up to four years in prison if convicted, though it’s not clear that the judge would opt to put him behind bars.

If convicted, President Trump would almost certainly appeal the matter.

The main jury panel of 12 people is made up of seven men and five women, including a retired wealth manager, a security engineer, a software developer, a teacher, two lawyers, a physical therapist, a speech therapist, and a product manager. The foreman was identified as a man who works in sales.

The former president said last week he plans to testify in the case. However, he is not under any legal obligation to do so.

The judge earlier this week told President Trump that he has to show up in court every day the trial is in session or could face an arrest.

The former president’s lawyers had asked a judge whether he could attend a Supreme Court hearing, which the judge denied. They also asked the judge if President Trump could attend his son’s high school graduation ceremony, but the judge said he would make a decision on that at a later date.

Also this week, the judge told prosecutors they cannot play audio of an “Access Hollywood” tape with President Trump’s comments that became the subject of controversy in 2016. They also cannot use allegations of sexual misconduct that surfaced at the time after the tape went public, Judge Merchan said.

However, the judge allowed prosecutors to enter testimony from Karen McDougal, another woman who claimed to have an affair with President Trump. The former president denied her claims.

President Trump is involved in four criminal cases, but it’s not clear that any others will reach trial before the November election. Appeals and other legal matters have caused delays in the other three cases to which he has also pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors also brought a request to bring up President Trump’s prior legal entanglements if he takes the witness stand in the criminal case.

Manhattan prosecutors have said they want to question the former president about his recent civil

fraud trial that resulted in a \$454 million judgment after a judge claimed that President Trump had lied about his wealth for years.

He is appealing that verdict and said the judge and state attorney general are leftists who are biased against him.

**By Jack Phillips**

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