

March 28, 2024

Jury selection will likely begin next month in Manhattan in *People of the State of New York v. Donald Trump*. The 34 felony counts in the Trump indictment relate to falsification of business records as part of a cover-up of payments made to Stephanie Clifford, the adult film actress known as Stormy Daniels, as a means to interfere with the 2016 presidential election. The facts alleged in the indictment recount much more than a sordid soap opera and corporate malfeasance; they also describe conduct that should matter to anyone who cares about democracy, voter information, and meaningful voter choice.

The Manhattan indictment alleges that the payments were made to cover up an alleged affair with the adult film star, information that might have influenced voter choice had it come to light before the election. As the [Statement of Facts](#) that accompanies the indictment describes, Trump “orchestrated a scheme with others to influence the 2016 presidential election by identifying and purchasing negative information about him to suppress its publication and benefit the Defendant’s electoral prospects.” As legal and ethics experts [have explained](#), this corrupt interference scheme might have been effective:

It is entirely possible that the alleged election interference might have altered the outcome of the 2016 contest, which was decided by just under 80,000 votes in three states. Coming, as it might have, on the heels of the “Access Hollywood” disgrace, the effort to keep the scandal from voters may have saved Mr. Trump’s political prospects.

The instance of election interference in 2016 might also be understood as an early sign of Trump’s antipathy for voters, which surfaced again in behavior culminating in the January 6th violent attempt to overturn the 2020 election results and disrupt the peaceful transfer of power.

If the rule of law is to remain meaningful, no one—not even a former president—should be allowed to be above the law, and all the Trump criminal trials must play out. The first of these trials is important. We, the undersigned organizations, stand united in our desire for a prompt and fair trial that goes wherever the facts and the law lead. The undersigned organizations also express our hopes that as the Manhattan trial unfolds, the full context for the charges is made clear and understandable to the American public. Our nation deserves nothing less.

Respectfully,

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Clean Elections Texas
Common Cause
Constitutional Accountability Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Defend Democracy Project
Democracy 21
Free Speech for People
Indivisible
Lawyers Defending American Democracy
MoveOn
People For the American Way
People Power United
Public Citizen
Secure Elections Network
Stand Up America
State Democracy Defenders Action