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USA

Trump Indicted: What Will Be the Political Impact?

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Former president Donald J. Trump has been indicted and the Republican Party and his rightwing supporters are rallying around him. This event brings us to a new stage that will be replete with indictments, political struggles in Congress, and perhaps significant social upheaval. At issue is the future of the Republican Party and America's far-right. But also, of American democracy.

A Manhattan, New York grand jury has indicted former president Donald Trump on March 30, reportedly on 30 charges of business fraud and violation of election laws in the payment of \$130,000 in hush money to the pornographic film star Stormy Daniels before his election in 2016. This is the first indictment of a sitting or former U.S. president and will have serious political repercussions.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, carried out the investigation and brought the case before the grand jury. The specific charges will be revealed on April 5 when Trump's attorneys say he will turn himself in and he will be photographed, finger-printed, read his rights, and could be handcuffed.

This indictment is only one of Trump's many serious legal problems. Trump still faces charges for attempting to illegally overturn his electoral defeat in Georgia, for his role in provoking the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, for illegal removal of government papers and obstruction of justice, as well as other charges. This indictment will surely encourage other D.A.s to bring long overdue charges against Trump.

Trump claims that he is "the most innocent man in the history of the country" and that the charges against him are the result of a "witch-hunt" by "radical leftist Democrats" and constitute "blatant election interference." In his typical demagogic style he called D.A. Bragg, who is Black, "a Soros-backed animal." Calling Black people "animals" is an old racist trope and alleging that Bragg is acting on behalf of Jewish businessman George Soros, a classic anti-Semitic argument.

Trump, who launched his campaign for the Republican nomination for president in 2024, remains the front runner in the Republican Party, supported by 51% of Republicans, ten points ahead of his rival Florida Governor Ron DeSanti despite the indictment. But 61% of all Americans say they do not want Trump to be president again. Trump could even if indicted and convicted still run for president and if he won take office.

(In 1920, Socialist Party candidate Eugene V. Debs who was in prison convicted of violating the Espionage Act of 1917 for an anti-war speech he gave which the government claimed would discourage military enrollment, ran for president with a button reading "For President Convict No. 9653." He won one million votes that year.)

Democrats have supported the indictment as based on the law and the facts and have called upon the public to remain calm. The Republican Party has once more rallied around Trump, all afraid of the tremendous power he holds over the party's base. Republican House majority leader Kevin McCarthy, former Trump U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, Congressman Jim Jordan, and rightwinger Marjorie Taylor Greene, rushed to defend Trump. Republican Congressman Ronny Jackson of Texas, formerly Trump's personal physician, said, "These cowardly Democrats HATE Trump and HATE his voters even more," he wrote. "When Trump wins, THESE PEOPLE WILL PAY!!"

Before the grand jury's decision, Trump warned of "potential death and destruction" if he was indicted and far-right media platforms such as The Donald and 4chan, have since posted racist and violent attacks on Bragg and have

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called for “war,” “civil war,” “assassinations,” “terrorism,” and “chaos.” There have been death threats against Bragg, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, and Stormy Daniels. So far there has been no rightwing violence and pro-Trump demonstrations in New York have been outnumbered by the many who hate Trump and what he stands for.

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