

Donald Trump criminal trial over hush money payment to start next March

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New York, May 25 (RHC)-- A Manhattan judge has scheduled the criminal trial of former United States President Donald Trump to begin in March of next year, when the Republican Party's presidential primaries will be in full swing.

Trump, a candidate in the 2024 presidential race, appeared via video in a New York courtroom on Tuesday, as part of a continuing criminal case over alleged hush money payments made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Judge Juan Merchan tentatively scheduled his trial for March 25, 2024, a date that appeared to elicit frustration from the Republican leader, who threw up his hands. In April, Trump pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records.

Tuesday's hearing was also an opportunity for Judge Merchan to advise Trump on restrictions surrounding the upcoming trial. When Merchan asked on Tuesday if Trump had a copy of an order restricting him from disclosing certain evidence to third parties, the former president replied, "I do."

The judge's order allows Trump to speak publicly about the criminal case, but it bars him from using evidence turned over by prosecutors during the discovery process to target witnesses or others involved in the trial. The order also bans Trump from posting trial evidence on social media. Under the restrictions, some of that evidence, deemed to be especially sensitive, may only be held by Trump's lawyers and not Trump himself.

Merchan noted that the order should not be seen as an effort to silence the former president. He explained that Trump has the right to speak about the trial and defend himself in public.

Trump faces a long list of legal issues, including two investigations from the US Department of Justice and a separate probe in the state of Georgia, where he allegedly pressured elected officials to alter the results of the 2020 election.

Earlier this month, a jury in New York also found Trump liable for defamation and sexual abuse in a civil suit brought by the writer and magazine columnist E Jean Carroll. The jury awarded Carroll nearly \$5 million in compensatory and punitive damages. A second defamation suit brought by Carroll is currently ongoing.

In April, Trump became the first former president in US history to face criminal charges after he was indicted on 34 felony counts in the Manhattan case. However, those legal issues have yet to dent his popularity with Republican voters, and Trump remains the current frontrunner in the race to become the Republican presidential candidate for the 2024 election.

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