

OPINION *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Opinion: Voters deserve timely calls in Trump's legal cases

Robert Weiner and Ting Cui The Detroit News

Published 8:00 p.m. ET Jan. 28, 2024 | Updated 8:00 p.m. ET Jan. 28, 2024

In the midst of mounting legal challenges, former President Donald Trump finds himself entangled in a web of indictments that may hamper his general election prospects.

Despite his Republican front-runner status, recent Supreme Court cases examining Trump's role in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection could jeopardize his election campaign, serving as a stark reminder of the dangers he poses to democracy.

In July 2023, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and her prosecutor team unveiled criminal charges against 16 Republicans who had acted as fake electors in the 2020 election to prevent President-elect Joe Biden from assuming office.

Hearings, evidence and witnesses for the 91 felony charges against Trump pending in at least four trials would remind Americans of the facts, not his spin. Since the inception of these cases, Trump has employed a deliberate delay of the cases to avoid prosecution.

Trump's federal election interference case with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit on absolute presidential immunity is scheduled for trial on March 4. The case will most likely end up at the Supreme Court, but the process could take months and a decision may not be made before November. Concurrently, the Supreme Court is slated to hear arguments regarding Trump's Colorado ballot eligibility under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment on Feb. 8 — unless push backed by delays.

Trump's strategic maneuvers include witness blocking, evidence and coverage obstruction, coupled with courthouse steps bluster and propaganda, raising concerns about the timeline of the legal proceedings.

The American public deserves a resolution before they cast their ballot.

The court, currently deliberating the immunity question, faces the delicate task of balancing justice and political bias. It is crucial to recognize that the call for accountability is not a politicized witch hunt unique to Trump. Rather, a fundamental aspect of justice, and essential to reinforcing the foundations of our democracy.

The public has a history of convicting corrupt politicians. If they were held accountable, why can't Trump be as well?

Sen. Mitch McConnell emphasized at the Senate impeachment trial, "We have a criminal justice system in the country, we have civil litigation, and former presidents are not immune from being held accountable by either one."

There is substantial, well-documented evidence of Trump's attempts to undermine the 2020 election. He disseminated false information about voter fraud, urged Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensberger to "find 11,780 votes," and incited violence to a crowd of protesters, culminating in the Jan. 6 attack. Additionally, several key figures from Trump's administration testified before a grand jury, providing crucial evidence on his role in the insurrection.

Trump's legal team recognizes that their most effective election strategy involves prolonging the case. It could be damaging to Trump's presidential aspirations if he is federally convicted of manipulating the previous election, while he simultaneously asks the American people to send him back to the White House.

Recent polls substantiate this concern. An Edison Research poll from the Iowa caucuses showed that 31% of Iowa Republicans believe Trump would be unfit if convicted. A January 2024 poll from Harvard CAPS-Harris found that if Trump is convicted on charges related to the Jan. 6 insurrection, President Biden leads Trump 52% to 48% in a hypothetical matchup.

As the legal drama unfolds, it prompts a crucial examination of the delicate balance between presidential immunity and accountability.

In a speech to Justice Department employees on Jan. 5, 2022, Attorney General Merrick Garland said prosecutors remained "committed to holding all Jan. 6 perpetrators, at any level, accountable under law."

As the court navigates these complexities, it bears the responsibility to vote judiciously against Trump if the evidence supports it. If Trump prevails, it raises concerns about the potential for a future president to commit crimes with impunity. That is not American justice.

Americans deserve a swift resolution before November.

Robert Weiner was a spokesman in the Clinton and George W. Bush White Houses. He was communications director of the House Government Operations Committee, and senior aide to four-Star Gen./Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey and Reps. John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, and Ed Koch. Ting Cui is a policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.