

Manhattan jury finds Trump family companies guilty on all charges

Jacob Crosse
6 December 2022

After a six-week trial, a Manhattan jury needed only one day to find two Trump family businesses guilty on all 17 criminal counts leveled against the organizations. Charges against the Trump Organization and the Trump Payroll Corporation included criminal tax fraud, conspiracy and falsifying business records.

To find the organizations guilty, the New York jury had to find that the Trump Organization's former chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg, or his subordinate, senior vice president and controller Jeffrey McConney, as high agents of the company, acted on behalf of the company to their benefit.

Jurors found that the executives at Trump's companies orchestrated a long-running tax dodge scheme that allowed them access to high-rise apartments, luxury cars and bountiful holiday bonuses, all off the books and tax-free. Weisselberg admitted on the stand and in a previous guilty plea to falsifying business records and keeping a separate set of accounting books in order to hide the expenditures, in the process reducing the tax burden on the companies and on himself.

The well-known practice, which is illegal, lasted for decades within the Trump family businesses and is, in fact, pervasive throughout the corporate-financial elite and the capitalist economy as a whole. Major exposures of the financial secrets of the world's elite have shown that tax evasion and money laundering among the financial oligarchy are not just routine, but ubiquitous.

Despite being found guilty on all counts, the Trump Organization was fined only \$1.62 million, a fraction of the hundreds of millions of dollars the business reports in yearly revenues and a rounding error compared to

Trump's estimated \$3.2 billion net worth as of September 2022, according to *Forbes*.

The verdict is politically significant as it implicates the former president. The Trump Organization was founded by Trump's fascist father, Fred Trump, and is now, along with the Trump Payroll Corporation, legally a felonious enterprise.

The convictions could also be used as evidence in a future criminal trial against Trump. They further jeopardize Trump's third run for president, which he announced three weeks ago.

While Trump himself was not on trial, he was named several times during the proceedings by prosecutors. Following the guilty verdict, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said the criminal investigation into Trump, which appeared to be winding down earlier this year, remains "active and ongoing."

The verdict is the culmination of a long-running investigation that began with a criminal inquiry by then-Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. into the Trump Organization in 2018. Vance's handpicked successor, Bragg, took up the investigation after he was elected in 2021.

Within a month of being sworn in, Bragg informed the two leading prosecutors in the investigation that he did not feel they had enough evidence to bring charges against Trump himself, as they had yet to turn Weisselberg against his lifelong employer. The two prosecutors promptly resigned and a previously impaneled grand jury was allowed to expire.

While he refused to turn against his boss, Weisselberg still served as the prosecution's chief witness in the trial against the Trump family businesses. As part of a plea deal agreed to earlier this year, Weisselberg admitted that he and McConney engaged in a conspiracy to "defraud federal, New York state, and New York City tax authorities."

In order to secure a 100-day sentence, despite being found guilty of 15 felonies, Weisselberg had to testify against the companies he oversaw for decades as Trump's so-called "money man."

On the stand during the trial, Weisselberg, who is still an employee of the Trump Organization, accepted all of the blame for the criminal practices in which the company engaged, supposedly free from any influence or direction from Trump or his family members. Defense lawyers for the Trump companies likewise argued that Weisselberg went "rogue" when he decided to manipulate the company books for his and his family's personal benefit.

In rendering the guilty verdicts, the jury indicated that it found the defense arguments unpersuasive.

On the morning prior to the guilty verdict, Trump reposted an earlier statement on his personal media platform, Truth Social, accusing the District Attorney's Office of engaging in a "political Witch Hunt" over "Fringe Benefits, something that in the history of our Country, has never been so tried in Court before."

In a statement to the *New York Times* following the verdict, Trump said he was "disappointed with the verdict" and planned to appeal. Alan Futerfas, a defense lawyer for the Trump Organization, confirmed that the company would appeal.

Trump, seeking to distance himself from the verdict, said the case was about Weisselberg "committing tax fraud on his personal tax returns." The Trump Organization similarly released a statement after the verdict stating that the "notion that a company could be held responsible for an employee's actions, to benefit themselves, on their own personal tax returns is simply preposterous."

Weisselberg's lawyer, Nicholas Gravante Jr., issued a statement after the verdict was reached asserting that his client fulfilled his "only obligation relating to the trial... [to] testify truthfully, and clearly he did."

DA Bragg said following the verdict, "The former president's companies now stand convicted of crimes. That is consequential. It underscores that in Manhattan we have one standard of justice for all."

Bragg's comments are betrayed by reality. Aside from the token fine levied against the companies, which will in no way prevent them from continuing their criminal operations, the fact that Trump himself has yet to be charged with a crime related to the numerous illegal activities in which his businesses were engaged underscores the two-tier class justice system that exists in America.

The most damning example of "class justice" in America is the fact that Trump remains free 23 months after attempting to overthrow the government.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact