

New York Congressman and serial liar George Santos indicted on 13 federal charges

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On Wednesday, freshman New York Republican congressman and con-artist George Anthony Devolder Santos was arraigned on 13 federal charges. The Long Island Republican is facing 7 counts of wire fraud, 3 counts of money laundering, 2 counts of lying on federal disclosure forms and 1 count of fraudulently collecting unemployment benefits.

Since Santos was elected last year, his finances and personal story have been subjected to intense scrutiny as it has become clear that virtually every aspect of his life's story has been shown to be a lie. While his Democratic opponent failed to uncover any of Santos' chicanery during the campaign, the lawmaker has admitted to lying about his educational background, his non-employment at major financial institutions, his claims to be "Jew-ish," his ill-gotten wealth, and even the circumstances around his mother's death, who he originally claimed died as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

While Santos' lies have stood out for their brazenness and frequency, he is entirely representative of the American criminal ruling class and capitalist politics as a whole. Santos is far from the first, or last, politician, to have embellished his credentials or to have stolen campaign monies to fund his lavish lifestyle.

President Joe Biden dropped out of the 1988 Democratic presidential primary race after it was revealed he had lied repeatedly about his academic credentials, while his predecessor, Donald Trump, still maintains he won a "rigged election" in 2020.

Speaking to media outside of a New York courthouse on Wednesday, a defiant Santos, mirroring Trump, the current 2024 Republican presidential front runner,

characterized the charges against him a "witch hunt." Despite the serious charges leveled against the Republican representative, Santos, who had previously announced he will seek re-election next year, told the gaggle of reporters surrounding him he would not resign.

The government alleges in the indictment that Santos engaged in three separate criminal schemes in the time leading up to, and during his run for office. As part of the terms of his \$500,000 bond Santos had to give up his passport. If convicted, Santos could face up to 20 years in prison, although there is little chance he would spend a fraction of that time behind bars.

In the first scheme, the government alleges that as a candidate Santos solicited contributions to his campaign which were then funneled to his personal bank accounts and used to purchase luxury designer clothing, gifts for friends, and pay off credit card debt. As part of the scheme, Santos would solicit contributions to the campaign via personal text messages and emails under the guise of buying "television advertising."

In the second scheme, the government alleges that shortly after the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security or CARES Act, which established temporary enhanced unemployment benefits for millions of jobless Americans and provided trillions to Wall Street, Santos applied to receive unemployment insurance. This is despite the fact he had multiple income streams and was gainfully employed.

The government alleges that in June 2020, Santos applied for unemployment and that he claimed he lost

his job the week of March 22, the same week the CARES Act was passed. While thousands of workers waited months to begin receiving their unemployment benefits, if they did at all, shortly after applying and through April 2021, like clockwork, Santos received roughly \$500 a week from the federal government, totaling nearly \$25,000.

As workers know, part of the process of obtaining unemployment insurance is attesting to the government every week that you are, in fact, unemployed and available to work. Unfortunately for Santos, prosecutors claim that he was employed as a “Regional Director” at an “investment firm” in south Florida where he had a salary of “approximately \$120,000.”

Furthermore, Blake Zeff, a documentary filmmaker who was working on a project involving Santos, revealed tapes he had showing Santos acknowledge that he was employed in 2020.

Speaking to MSNBC’s Ari Melber, Zeff said the documentary with Santos fell apart because the lawmaker “wanted a lot of money from us.”

In the tapes, Santos is heard explaining to Zeff why he does not think he committed a crime: “So, the way I look at it is they [referring to the US government] are not understanding. The question is simple. George, why was your income 55 thousand in 2020? And why is your income drastically higher? Well, here’s the answer to that: We struck a deal with a company *so nobody went unemployed* (emphasis added) and got reduced to live a very basic salary.”

Despite seemingly being caught on tape admitting to being employed in 2020, the same year he began collecting unemployment benefits, on Thursday, Santos voted in favor of an unemployment fraud bill. The bill which he co-sponsored is titled “The Protecting Taxpayers and Victims of Unemployment Fraud Act,” which would allow states to keep more of the money they recover from alleged over-payments and increase the statute of limitations period in which states can charge those accused of unemployment fraud.

Finally, the last batch of charges relate to Santos lying

on financial disclosure forms he had to submit as part of his campaign. On the forms Santos never disclosed he received unemployment benefits, or several other streams of income.

Outside of America, on Thursday, Santos signed a deal with Brazilian prosecutors in which he confessed to a theft case from over a decade ago. According to police, the then 19-year-old Santos wrote a pair of bad checks worth about \$430. As part of Thursday’s plea agreement Santos agreed to pay roughly \$2,000 in fines and \$2,800 to the victim.

While several Republicans, including Utah Senator Mitt Romney, have called on Santos to resign, neither House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, or Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell have followed suit. However, in a shift from his previous position, McCarthy said he would not support Santos in his 2024 re-election campaign.

Despite the fact Santos was a known fraud by the time he was sworn in to Congress this past January, McCarthy rewarded him for supporting his marathon bid for House speakership by placing him on two congressional committees. In light of the indictment Santos has “voluntarily” stepped down from his committee assignments.



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