

6th Circuit Calls for Sanctions Against Pro-Trump Lawyers Over Baseless Election Claims



A federal appeals court, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals at Cincinnati, has upheld sanctions against lawyers who supported former President Donald Trump for their involvement in a lawsuit that alleged election fraud in Michigan. The suit, filed by lawyers including Sidney Powell, claimed that Michigan officials had fraudulently manipulated the vote in favor of now-President Joe Biden through a wide-ranging interstate and international collaboration. The court ruled that the lawyers made a "whole raft" of baseless claims, particularly regarding Dominion Voting Systems and alleged foreign interference.

While the court acknowledged credible allegations of misconduct by election workers in Detroit mistreating Republican election challengers and some errors in calculating attorney fees owed, it detailed numerous problems with the suit. One key issue was that the suit's allegations concerned a different type of voting system than the one used in Michigan. The state's voters marked paper ballots fed into voting machines, which the lawyers' expert described as the only defensible method for voting systems.

The court highlighted several problematic aspects of the suit, including the reliance on a report that mistakenly attributed claims about Dominion Voting Systems to a different voting machine company. Another expert cited by the lawyers turned out to be a Dallas IT consultant with limited intelligence training, whose report did not address voting machine integrity as alleged. The court also questioned the qualifications of an expert who claimed knowledge of foreign interference with voting machines based on unrelated experience in telecom and the restaurant industry. Furthermore, the court pointed out that the suit relied on unsupported claims made in a few short tweets by an individual conducting a small phone survey, leading to the unreliable assertion that tens of thousands of mail-in ballots were lost or fraudulent.

The appeals court clarified that while some parts of the lawsuit were not deserving of sanctions, a federal judge erred in considering the entire suit as sanctionable. It emphasized that parties and their attorneys are free to use litigation for political expression and association, including contesting election results. However, the court upheld sanctions against Powell and five other lawyers who had the opportunity to abandon their frivolous claims but chose not to do so. The sanctions were upheld under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

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Among the lawyers involved in the case, sanctions were reversed for Emily Newman and Stephanie Junttila due to their minimal participation. However, sanctions were maintained against Lin Wood for his involvement with the Detroit defendants, as he claimed to represent the Michigan plaintiffs in a Delaware court filing and tweeted about the case. The state defendants did not seek sanctions against Wood, so he was not held liable for that specific sanction.

Paul Stablein, an attorney for Wood, expressed disagreement with the court's conclusion regarding Wood's involvement in the drafting and filing of the complaint in Michigan. Stablein clarified that Wood may have agreed with the other lawyers' efforts but had no knowledge of the specific content and facts of the complaint.

Sidney Powell, who played a prominent role in the lawsuit, has not yet responded to requests for comment on the appellate decision.

This ruling by the 6th Circuit serves as a significant rebuke to the pro-Trump lawyers involved, highlighting the importance of presenting credible and substantiated claims in legal proceedings. It underscores the responsibility of attorneys to maintain the integrity of the judicial process and serves as a reminder that baseless allegations can have severe consequences, including sanctions.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.