

Trump Civil Fraud Trial: Allegations and Defense Arguments Unfold



Former President Donald Trump is embroiled in a \$250 million civil lawsuit in New York that could significantly impact his personal fortune and real estate empire, pivotal in his journey to the White House.

Allegations Against Trump and Trump Organization Executives

New York Attorney General Letitia James has accused Trump, along with his sons Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr., and other high-ranking Trump Organization executives, of participating in a decade-long scheme involving "numerous acts of fraud and misrepresentation." The crux of the allegations is that they artificially inflated Trump's net worth to secure more favorable loan terms. A partial summary judgment from the judge indicated that Trump had submitted "fraudulent valuations" for his assets, leading to the ongoing trial to determine additional actions and potential penalties for the defendants.

Trump's Defense and Expert Testimony

Despite the allegations, Trump vehemently denies any wrongdoing, asserting that the allegedly inflated valuations were a testament to his business acumen. The defense's accounting expert, Eli Bartov, took the stand for a full day of testimony, offering a strong endorsement of Trump's financial statements. Bartov, a New York University professor, described Trump's statements as detailed and transparent, dismissing discrepancies as mere mistakes rather than intentional fraud.

Bartov is scheduled for a second day of testimony, during which the defense is expected to scrutinize his conclusions and motives. Notably, Trump, who attended the trial, cited Bartov's testimony as evidence that "absolutely no fraud" had occurred, emphasizing Bartov's reputation as a highly respected expert witness.

Trump's Reaction and Poll Numbers

Exiting the court after Thursday's testimony, Trump labeled the civil fraud case a "disgrace" and asserted that there were no issues with the loans, citing the bank's satisfaction. His legal spokesperson, Alina Habba, accused the attorney general's team of hypocrisy in treating Bartov, highlighting his previous use as a state witness.

Trump also boasted about leading by approximately 40 points in the Republican presidential primary, attributing the surge in poll numbers to the ongoing civil trial. He claimed that the public's understanding of the case increased his popularity, stating that his poll numbers were the highest ever.

Expert Testimony Continues

During the trial, Bartov was set to continue his testimony and emphasized that there was "no fraud here." While praising the transparency of Trump's financial statements, he downplayed their significance, arguing that lenders would conduct their valuations. Bartov pointed to Deutsche Bank's credit memos, which consistently marked down Trump's asset values, as evidence that lenders scrutinized the financial statements independently.

As the trial progresses, the significance of Bartov's testimony and its potential impact on the case remains a focal point. Trump is scheduled to take the stand as the defense's final witness on Monday, adding to the anticipation surrounding this high-stakes legal battle.