

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

## **Fulton County Grand Jury Indicts Trump, Giuliani, Other Associates in 2020 Election Investigation**

Source: Sarah D. Wire, *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2023

Former President Trump has been indicted in Georgia after an investigation by Fulton County Dist. Atty. Fani Willis into efforts to overturn the state's 2020 presidential election results. Eighteen others were also indicted, including Trump's personal lawyers Rudolph Giuliani and Sidney Powell, and former Chief of Staff Mark Meadows.

Trump was charged in the sweeping 98-page indictment with racketeering and a dozen other felonies, including solicitation of violation of oath by a public officer, conspiracy to commit forgery and false statements and writings.

Willis launched the probe in February 2021 after news broke that the former president was recorded during a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call pressuring Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger to "find" him 11,780 votes, enough to win in Georgia. Trump has insisted that making the call was appropriate.

Willis, a Democrat, had reportedly long focused on charging Trump and his associates under Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, allowing her to prosecute numerous people allegedly involved in a wide-ranging criminal scheme. All 19 defendants are charged under that statute. The act is broader than the federal RICO law.

The enterprise was working "to accomplish the illegal goal of allowing Donald J. Trump to seize the presidential term of office beginning on Jan. 20, 2021," Willis said at a news conference late Monday night. "...Rather than abide by Georgia's legal process for election challenges, the defendants engaged in a criminal racketeering enterprise to overturn Georgia's presidential election result," Willis said.

Arrest warrants were issued for all the defendants, Willis said, but she is allowing them to voluntarily surrender by noon on Aug. 25. Willis said she intends to ask for a trial date scheduled within the next six months and will try all 19 defendants together.

"I don't have any desire to be first or last," Willis said as to when she hoped to try her case as Trump faces three other trials in New York, Florida and Washington, D.C. "I want to try him and be respectful for our sovereign states."

The indictment lays out a sprawling effort to disrupt the 2020 election in Fulton County, elsewhere in Georgia and in other states, including false representations in the courts, false accusations made by Trump and others against a pair of poll workers, and misusing the power of the Justice Department to try to convince state lawmakers to overturn the results.

The indictment details a plan to assemble a slate of fake electors to meet in secret at the state Capitol to cast votes for Trump despite Joe Biden having won a majority of votes in the state, and to use the competing slates to throw Georgia's result into turmoil when Congress met to certify the election results on Jan. 6, 2021, as well as pressure put on former Vice President Mike Pence to overturn the election himself during that proceeding. It also outlines the successful effort to copy the Coffee County, Ga., election system on Jan. 7, 2021.

The indictment, which came after grand jurors heard roughly 10 hours of testimony Monday, contains 41 criminal counts. The other defendants are Trump's attorneys John Eastman, Jenna Ellis, Bob Cheeley, Ray Smith III and Kenneth Chesebro; former Assistant U.S. Atty. Gen. Jeffrey Clark; GOP strategist Michael Roman; former Coffee County elections supervisor Misty Hampton; former

Coffee County GOP Chair Cathy Latham; Atlanta bail bondsman Scott Hall; publicist Trevian Kutti; Illinois pastor Stephen Cliffguard Lee; Harrison Floyd, the director of Black Voices for Trump; state Sen. Shawn Still; and former Georgia Republican Party Chair David Shafer.

Several of the indicted Georgia residents were charged with impersonating a public officer by holding themselves out as duly qualified electors. Cheeley was charged with lying to the special grand jury that heard evidence in the case for roughly seven months. The special grand jury recommended more than a dozen people for indictment, and its forewoman hinted in an interview with the New York Times in February that Trump was among them. Willis needed approval from a regular grand jury, which voted Monday to bring charges.

In a statement released by his campaign, Trump accused Willis of waiting to seek charges until it would influence the 2024 presidential campaign. His campaign also released detailed criticism of Willis' record as a prosecutor and accused her of fundraising off of the investigation.

“Ripping a page from Crooked Joe Biden’s playbook, Willis has strategically stalled her investigation to try and maximally interfere with the 2024 presidential race and damage the dominant Trump campaign,” it said.

Willis dismissed the idea that she had a political motive for bringing the indictment. “I make decisions in this office based on the facts and the law,” Willis said. “The law is completely nonpartisan.”

On July 31 a Fulton County judge rejected an attempt by Trump’s attorneys to gut the district attorney’s investigation before criminal charges were announced.

Security around the courthouse in Atlanta has increased over the last few weeks. On Tuesday, law enforcement will close security gates around the state Capitol for an “undetermined period of time” in anticipation of potential protests. Protesters gathered outside the statehouse after Trump lost in 2020.

Trump’s indictment by a Georgia grand jury adds to a growing list of legal troubles amid his presidential campaign.

Trump was indicted Aug. 1 in Washington, D.C., following an investigation by special counsel Jack Smith into actions that Trump and his allies allegedly took to keep him in office despite losing the 2020 election. He was arraigned in that case on Aug. 3, pleading not guilty to all four felony charges.

Trump is also scheduled to go to trial in New York in March for state charges related to payments allegedly made during the 2016 presidential campaign to cover up an affair with porn actor Stormy Daniels. And he has another trial scheduled for May on 39 federal charges brought by Smith related to his retention of classified documents after he left office. He has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

### **Possible Response Questions**

- What are your thoughts about this indictment of Donald Trump? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.