



# COURTHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

## Closing Arguments

*The week in Courthouse News*

November 16, 2023

Representative George Santos made a repeat appearance as the internet's main character in a banner week (of what's been, [in his words](#), a "year from Hell") for the federally indicted first-term congressman.

[Support for booting Santos from the House is growing](#) after the House Ethics Committee's damning report that Santos stole money from his campaign, deceived donors and lied to federal regulators.

The committee found that [Santos spent campaign funds and donations on personal expenses](#) like rent, Botox, OnlyFans entertainment and hauls from luxury retailers like Hermes and Ferragamo. On Friday, Representative Michael Guest, the committee chairman and a fellow Republican, filed a resolution to force a vote to expel Santos. [Benjamin S. Weiss]

Santos has frequented the hot seat ever since his election last year, starting after it came to light that he'd lied about his work, education and family while running for office. By the end of January [he was off House committees](#) while under an investigation that [spurred federal charges in May](#) against the Long Island rep.

Even as Congress looked into claims Santos lied to the FEC about campaign spending and sexually harassed a job applicant, he [easily survived an effort to oust him](#) earlier this month. But the ethics report could change his fortune this time around, as some GOP reps who helped keep him in office are [changing their minds](#), and say they'd side against him in a post-Thanksgiving vote. And while he still isn't stepping down, Santos now says he won't run for reelection.

Regardless of his future in Congress, the law isn't done with Santos, who's up against nearly two dozen counts in the Eastern District of New York.

His former campaign fundraiser Samuel Miele [pleaded guilty to wire fraud earlier this week](#) — he was accused of impersonating a congressional aide in 2021 to solicit donations to Santos — making him the second Santos campaign staffer to take a plea deal. [Nika Schoonover] After [ex-treasurer Nancy Marks' plea in October](#), the feds [followed up with new charges](#) against Santos.

Guess it's your move, [Bowen Yang](#). Lots more Courthouse News ahead.

— [Nina Pullano](#)

P.S. We're taking a break next week. Happy Thanksgiving! 🍂

**Here's what else happened in court this week:**



The Supreme Court, which for months has been dogged by claims that justices took unreported gifts from powerful friends with cases before the court, [adopted an ethics code](#) — but [court reform proponents are unimpressed](#). [[Kelsey Reichmann](#)]

» Jurors [convicted David DePape of attacking Paul Pelosi](#), former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, with a hammer at their San Francisco home. Though he pleaded not guilty, DePape [admitted to the attack](#): It was [part of his plan to root out corruption](#) by traversing the country

and kidnapping the likes of Nancy Pelosi, Gavin Newsom and Hunter Biden. He said listening to podcasts led him to believe a cabal of elites ran the country and were trampling on the rights of Americans. [[Michael Gennaro](#)]

» A New York judge [temporarily lifted the gag orders](#) issued in Donald Trump's civil fraud trial, finding the orders, which barred Trump from making public comments about the trial judge's staff, were unconstitutional. Trump also took an L on Friday, however, when Judge Arthur Engoron [denied his mistrial motion](#). [[Erik Uebelacker](#)]

» After [days of deadlock](#) jurors spared Michael Lacey, founder of the controversial classified advertising website [Backpage.com](#), [convictions for facilitating prostitution](#) but found him guilty of money laundering following the two-month trial over ads placed in the site's "adult" section. Lacey, one of five defendants, faces up to 20 years in prison. [[Joe Duhownik](#)]

» Google [wrapped up its defense 40 days into the government's antitrust trial](#) over its stronghold as the default search engine — but not before an expert witness accidentally let it slip that Google pays Apple 36% of its ad revenue, a detail of the contract making Google the default search engine on Safari browsers that was previously kept under wraps. [[Ryan Knappenberger](#)]

» Several residents of Gaza and two human rights NGOs [sued the Biden administration in California federal court](#) saying the president and his secretaries of state and defense violated the 1948 Genocide Convention by failing to intervene in Israel's recent actions in Gaza and "prevent the unfolding genocide of Palestinian people." [[Natalie Hanson](#)]



R&B singer Cassie [accused rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs of rape and violent physical abuse](#) in a Manhattan federal complaint filed in the final days of a one-year "look-back window" for [survivors to bring claims ordinarily barred](#) by the statute of limitations. Combs "vehemently denies" the accusation. [\[Josh Russell\]](#)

[Sidebar — a podcast from Courthouse News](#)



No institution in American life has a far-reaching and outsized role in communities quite like the public school system, and issues like school choice and taxpayer-funded religious schools have muddied the role of religion in public education.

Sidebar's new episode, "Reading, writing, religion," takes a dive into the heart of the public education system and its role in our democracy, looking at landmark rulings like *Brown v. Board of Education* and the dual role of public schools: to educate and to unite students from various backgrounds in a shared vision.

The team will navigate the treacherous waters of the school choice movement, from religious schools to church-state separation and the impact on the future of public education. [[Kirk McDaniel](#) hosts, [Kelsey Reichmann](#) reports]

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SCOTUS [declined to grant Florida emergency relief to enforce its drag show restrictions](#). Thomas, Alito and Gorsuch publicly dissented from the majority, which didn't explain its denial. Kavanaugh (and Barrett) expressed interest in reviewing the issues presented by the state's application but said the case wasn't the right one to review the matters. [[Kelsey Reichmann](#)]

#### [ICYMI: New cases and rulings on our radar](#)

» **Straight pride flag:** DENVER — Not allowing his children to hang a straight pride flag next to a gay pride one on their classroom door is a violation of their First and 14th Amendment rights, [a Colorado man says in his suit](#) against Denver Public Schools.

» **Covid cruise:** SAN FRANCISCO — The Ninth Circuit [revived a wrongful death lawsuit](#) filed against Princess Cruise Lines after a passenger on a cruise to Hawaii died of exposure to Covid-19. The Death on the High Seas Act did not preempt the claim because the cruise line didn't disprove that the deceased fell ill on the tender boat rather than on the cruise ship.

» **Bully mom:** HARRISBURG, Penn. — An appeals court in Pennsylvania [upheld the conviction of a cheerleader's mother for harassment](#); she was anonymously texting the other cheerleaders' mothers images of their children and criticizing their behavior.

— [Daniel Conrad](#), Audrey Rodeman

**Top 8: This week's most-read stories**

***From across the Courthouse News website, including news from Capitol Hill, state legislative decisions and major research developments.***

1. [Baltimore city prosecutor convicted of federal charges](#)
2. [Latin America's first nonbinary judge found dead in Mexico home](#)
3. [Supreme Court releases ethics code after criticism over gifts](#)
4. [Palestinians file lawsuit accusing Biden administration of violating Genocide Convention](#)
5. [Senate confusion, Republican fury as Dems hold out on SCOTUS ethics subpoenas](#)
6. [Fifth Circuit sides with Louisiana attorney in First Amendment row with state bar](#)
7. [Judge affirms May trial for Trump in Mar-a-Lago case](#)
8. [Huntington Beach loses effort to dodge California housing requirements](#)

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