

NEWS



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DOJ to Defend President Trump in E. Jean Carroll Case

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

IN A RECENT DEVELOPMENT in a defamation case between former magazine columnist E. Jean Carroll and President Donald Trump, the United States Department of Justice has decided to step in to defend the President. This means that the case is no longer Carroll vs. Trump, but Carroll vs. The United States. The case began in November of last year, following Ms. Carroll's earlier claims that the President sexually assaulted her in the mid-1990s. The claims led to a negative public image and eventual unemployment when some people suspected she had woven the tale to gain money and support from anti-Trump politicians.

The DOJ's move to take over defense in the trial came when Attorney General William Barr made the argument that since the case began during Mr. Trump's presidency, he can write a request to Barr for protection under the 1988 Westfall Act. This allows for the United States to step in and assume defense in place of any federal employee in cases not involving an offense to someone's constitutional rights or other select instances, according to Justice.gov, the DOJ's official website. However, the use of Westfall in this context confuses many, including Carroll and her attorney, Ms. Roberta Kaplan. This is due to the fact that this law specifies that the actions being sued over must have happened specifically while the individual in question was working within their duties with the federal government. In this case, it does not line up, as President Trump supposedly raped the plaintiff in a department store changing room almost 20 years ago--long before his presidency and any duties therefore.

Barr's argument is that since the claims against Trump themselves occurred during his presidency, the government is still able to step in. In addition, the fact that Trump has personally and publicly answered questions regarding the case during his presidency is grounds for still being able to enact the Westfall Act. He says that this law is common use, and he does not believe this particular case is outside its capabilities. Ms. Elie Honig, a CNN legal analyst, stated that it is a stretch of an argument. "I can't remotely conceive how DOJ can argue with a straight face that it is somehow within the official duties of the President to deny a claim that he committed sexual assault years before he took office," she told CNN.

If the DOJ is successful in taking the role as defendant in this case, it may mean the end of Carroll's prosecution. If it is found that President Trump's appeal to Barr does not constitute a legal application of the Westfall Act, it may mean he will be forced to represent himself in whatever court case may occur, unless he decides to opt for an attorney. It is not likely that the department would accuse itself of misusing this law, so only time will tell who defends whom and how that affects the outcome, which, if it happens before the election, could have an effect on how people vote.

Hope for Covid-19 Vaccine

BY ERIKA SOUKOP

WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC taking over the world and our way of life, people have been wondering for the past several months whether things will ever return to normal. Fortunately, there is hope looming in the horizon. Or is there?

According to The New York Times, there are currently 40 vaccines being tested in clinical trials on humans and 92 preclinical vaccines. One American company named Pfizer is in the running for producing a working vaccine along with eight other companies. In an interview with CBS relayed on CNN, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla stated "there is a 'quite good chance' that the team testing the vaccine candidate will know whether it works by the end of October." So, we could in fact know by October whether or not the Pfizer vaccine is viable. "Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Friday he remains 'cautiously optimistic' that a vaccine will be ready by the end of the year," according to CNN's Dakin Andone. While we could receive the good news in the next two months that a vaccine will be effective in halting COVID-19, there are still issues we need to consider. How many people will be able to access the vaccine, and how many will actually take it? An article from NPR puts it in clear terms: "The extent to which any vaccine that emerges will help halt the COVID-19 pandemic depends on how many people get the immunization. In order to put this pandemic in the rearview mirror, a large percentage of the population needs to either be vaccinated or gain immunity via an infection with the virus."

CNN spoke about how states are being asked to prepare to distribute a coronavirus vaccine as early as next month. An ultimate irony would be if a vaccine was created but could not be taken or distributed if states and countries aren't prepared. However, even with several trials underway that are aiming to find a Covid