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Complaint dismissed against Trump hush-money judge who donated to Biden

By Karen Freifeld

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Justice Juan Merchan warns former U.S. President Donald Trump that any further violations could land the former president in jail after fining him \$1,000 and holding him in contempt of court... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) [Read more](#)

NEW YORK, May 17 (Reuters) - The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct has dismissed an ethics complaint against Justice Juan Merchan, who is overseeing the hush money criminal case against [former U.S. President Donald Trump](#), a spokesperson for the judge said.

"Justice Merchan said the complaint, from more than a year ago, was dismissed in July with a caution," spokesperson Al Baker of the state Office of Court Administration said this week in response to a Reuters inquiry.

Under commission rules, a caution may be taken into consideration in the event of any future misconduct.

The complaint stemmed from donations in 2020 which, according to the Federal Election Commission, were for \$35 to the Democratic group ActBlue that included \$15 earmarked for Biden for President and \$10 each to Progressive Turnout Project and Stop Republicans. Reuters could not determine who made the complaint.

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The Republican Trump, hoping to take back the White House in a [Nov. 5 election](#) against Democratic [President Joe Biden](#), has sought to disqualify Merchan from the hush money case. Trump and his lawyers say the judge is conflicted because of his daughter's work as a political consultant for Democrats and have questioned the political contributions.

In its 2024 annual report, the Commission on Judicial Conduct said contributions violate the rules on prohibited political activity. The report said several dozen judges had apparently made prohibited contributions in the last few years, mostly to candidates for federal office. It said most were modest, typically under \$100 and sometimes as low as \$5 or \$10.

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The commission's investigation and its outcome have not been previously reported. A commission administrator declined to comment. The commission's proceedings are confidential unless it decides on public censure or other discipline or the judge makes them public.

Last year, Merchan denied Trump's first motion to get him to step aside, after a separate [Advisory Committee on Judicial Ethics](#) said the modest, more than two-year-old contributions could not create an impression of bias or favoritism.

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[On trial in New York](#), Trump has pleaded not guilty to falsifying business records related to a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn star Stormy Daniels, who alleges they had a sexual encounter. He denies having had an encounter.

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Trump filed another recusal motion last month. Merchan denied it.

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