

Former congressman George Santos sentenced to more than 7 years in prison

Santos's attorneys said he would seek a pardon from President Trump.

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By Mark Berman

George Santos, the disgraced former congressman who was expelled from the House after being accused of financial misconduct and telling myriad lies about his background, was sentenced Friday to more than seven years in prison.

Prosecutors said that even after pleading guilty last year, Santos “repeatedly attempted to shift blame onto others” and showed no genuine remorse. They had asked for him to be imprisoned for 87 months, saying that “a significant prison sentence is needed here” to deter him from further misdeeds and send a message “to other would-be fraudsters.”

Santos, 36, was also ordered to pay more than \$370,000 in restitution to victims and forfeit more than \$200,000. He was ordered to surrender by July 25.

John J. Durham, the interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, said after the sentencing that Santos was being held accountable for a years-long trail of deceit and theft that victimized “real people, and they suffered real losses.”

“He’s going to federal prison, and he’s going to be punished for his staggering fraud,” Durham said outside the courthouse.

After the sentencing, Santos left the courthouse and quickly entered a waiting car. His attorneys decried the sentence as unnecessarily harsh.

“In light of the court’s excessive, unprecedented sentence, Mr. Santos plans to seek a pardon from President Trump,” Robert Fantone and Andrew Mancilla, his attorneys, said in a statement. They said Santos would not have decided to pursue a pardon if his sentence were less severe.

Santos’s attorneys had asked the judge for a sentence of 24 months in prison, saying that he had accepted responsibility for his actions and already faced consequences, including losing his congressional seat and being publicly shamed. They wrote in a court filing that his actions “stemmed largely from a misguided desperation related to his political campaign, rather than inherent malice.”

Santos is the second former lawmaker given a significant prison sentence this year. Former U.S. senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey was sentenced in January to 11 years in prison for a corruption scheme.

Santos’s attorneys argued in court filings that he was facing a heftier sentence than others “convicted of comparable white-collar and political fraud offenses,” pointing to examples that included former congressmen Michael G. Grimm, who was sentenced in 2015 to eight months for tax fraud, and Duncan D. Hunter, sentenced in 2020 to 11 months for stealing campaign funds.

The sentencing Friday capped an astonishing rise and fall for Santos, a Republican elected to Congress in 2022 to represent a district in New York and ousted the following year.

News reports scrutinizing the Republican lawmaker laid bare an extraordinary web of lies on topics including his schooling, résumé, family history, employment record and connection to tragedies, among many others.

He was indicted in May 2023, with prosecutors accusing him of lying on federal forms about his campaign finances and taking unemployment benefits in 2020 while employed and running for Congress.

Later that year, the House of Representatives took the extremely rare step of expelling Santos after an ethics committee report accused him of stealing money from his campaign and deceiving donors about how their contributions would be used. The ethics committee's report depicted Santos as a fabulist who lied about numerous aspects of his life, was often in debt and had "luxury spending habits."

Santos dismissed the report as hyperbolic and said his fellow lawmakers were "bullying" him.

When Santos was forced from Congress, some lawmakers expressed concern about ousting a member who had not been convicted of a crime. The House still voted to make him only the sixth member of the body to be expelled.

Last year, Santos pleaded guilty to federal charges of aggravated identity theft and wire fraud, admitting to defrauding campaign donors in 2022. He acknowledged making false statements to Congress on disclosure forms and wrongfully claiming unemployment benefits.

Afterward, Santos was apologetic, saying in a news conference that he had "allowed ambition to cloud my judgment."

Santos's attorneys wrote in court filings that a two-year prison sentence, followed by probation, would reflect the seriousness of his crimes while recognizing that he has accepted responsibility.

Prosecutors, though, wrote in a court filing this month that Santos has denied real accountability, showing "defiance and victimhood" in social media postings and commentary about his case.

They included in their filing screenshots of social media posts attributed to Santos referring to him as a "scapegoat" and accusing the Justice Department of cracking down on him and giving others "slaps on the wrist."

These remarks, prosecutors said, showed that Santos remained unrepentant, even as his sentencing loomed.

"At a minimum, one would expect Santos to approach sentencing with a modicum of restraint so as not to undermine the attorneys who have advocated for leniency on his behalf," the filings said. "Instead, however, Santos has reverted to form and approaches sentencing with belligerence and an insatiable appetite for 'likes,' blaming his situation on everyone except himself."

Shayna Jacobs in New York contributed to this report.

What readers are saying

The comments overwhelmingly express skepticism about George Santos's 87-month prison sentence, with many predicting that President Trump will pardon him. Commenters draw parallels between Santos and Trump, criticizing both for their alleged misconduct and lack of accountability....

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