

DOJ probes billionaire Democrat's nonprofit that bankrolled sexual assault suit against Trump

By Susan Ferrechio - The Washington Times - Thursday, May 28, 2026



A left: LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman discusses the business networking site's performance on Tuesday, May 7, 2013, in Mountain View, Calif.

What to know

- Reid Hoffman funded E. Jean Carroll's lawsuit against Trump.
- Carroll forgot to disclose Hoffman's financial support under oath.
- The DOJ is investigating Carroll's potential perjury.
- Critics claim the investigation is politically motivated.

Ultra-wealthy Democratic donor and LinkedIn co-founder [Reid Hoffman](#) was a major funder of [E. Jean Carroll's](#) successful sexual assault lawsuit against President Trump.

But plaintiff [E. Jean Carroll](#) “completely forgot” when questioned under oath to disclose Mr. Hoffman’s financial involvement. Now, the [Justice Department](#) has opened an investigation into her perjury and the nonprofit operated by Mr. Hoffman.

The DOJ probe drew immediate rebuke from the left, who accused the Trump administration of weaponizing the government against a woman who a Manhattan jury decided was victimized by the president in a Bergdorf Goodman dressing room some three decades ago.

In 2023 and 2024, jurors awarded Ms. Carroll, a former Elle columnist, more than \$88 million for defamation and sexual abuse in two civil lawsuits against Mr. Trump.

Critics of Ms. Carroll’s lawsuits say the DOJ’s investigation into her misstatement under oath and the financial involvement of Mr. Hoffman will provide much-needed scrutiny of a case they’ve labeled “a hoax” paid for and directed by wealthy political opponents in a scheme to stop Mr. Trump from winning a second presidential term.

“Companies (or their principals) are making money off ordinary Americans only to turn around and use it to try to thwart the political choices made by ordinary Americans,” Jeff Clark, a former top Trump administration official, said Thursday. “Meanwhile, you get lectures about democracy.”

A source familiar with the probe said Ms. Carroll is not the subject of the investigation, at least for now.

Federal prosecutors in the Northern District of Illinois are conducting an investigation “related to her deposition and perjury,” but the case is more closely focused on American Future Republic, a nonprofit funded by Mr. Hoffman, which in 2020 paid Ms. Carroll’s law firm \$7 million.

Ms. Carroll won both lawsuits against Mr. Trump despite not remembering the year or date when she alleged he sexually assaulted her.

She also forgot it was Mr. Hoffman who was paying for at least one of her cases against Mr. Trump. The lawsuits kept Mr. Trump sidelined in a Manhattan courtroom while he was running for the Republican presidential nomination.

At right: E. Jean Carroll exits the New York Federal Court after former President Donald Trump appeared in court in New York on Sept. 6, 2024. (AP Photo/Eduardo Munoz Alvarez)



“I just completely forgot,” Ms. Carroll, now 82, told a CNN panel in May of 2023, when asked why she failed to disclose under oath that Mr. Hoffmann paid her legal fees. “I just completely forgot he even existed.”

Mr. Hoffman helped Ms. Carroll sue Mr. Trump while looming large in Democratic politics as a top donor to the party’s candidates and causes.

Mr. Hoffman was hell-bent on defeating Mr. Trump in 2016 and 2020 and even more determined to stop him in 2024, when he pledged to spend \$20 million to block the president’s third campaign for the White House.

In 2024, he contributed at least \$1 million to the Biden Victory Fund and \$10 million to Future Forward, a Democratic Super PAC. He donated an additional \$4 million to Republican Accountability PAC, a group that worked unsuccessfully to stop Mr. Trump from winning the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

“My primary motivation for participating in politics over the last eight years has been to oppose [Donald Trump’s](#) ongoing attempts to break American democracy by corrupting and hollowing out its most cherished institutions,” Mr Hoffman said in August of 2024. “Unlike some, I have not forgotten Trump’s support of the Jan 6th insurrection and its violence, nor his attempt to coerce state officials to ‘find’ him some more votes.”

Ms. Carroll's lawsuit seemed to fit the mission perfectly.

Following the jury's May 2023 decision finding Mr. Trump guilty of defamation and sexual abuse, Mr. Hoffman, in a Washington Post video, said he was "happy" to have covered Ms. Carroll's legal fees.

"I thought it was a good thing for society, not just her," he said, explaining his decision to pay for her case.

He said he was not surprised by the guilty verdict, which he said, "is a good showing about who Trump really is as a person and what kind of things he's done."

Mr. Hoffman's philanthropic advisor told The New York Times in 2023 that Mr. Hoffman did not know the \$7 million he initially provided Ms. Carroll's law firm for "people in obtaining their legal rights" would later be used to fund Ms. Carroll's lawsuit against Mr. Trump.

Mr. Hoffman's donation, advisor Dmitri Mehlhorn said, was provided in a grant through the nonprofit for a different lawsuit handled by Ms. Carroll's law firm, Kaplan Hecker & Fink.

Mr. Hoffman agreed later, at the request of lawyer Roberta A. Kaplan, that part or all of his donation, the size of which has never been disclosed, could be redirected to pay for Ms. Carroll's lawsuit.

Yet Ms. Carroll answered "no" when asked in an October 2022 deposition if anyone else was paying her legal fees.

Her lawyers informed Mr. Trump's legal team in April of 2023 that Ms. Carroll "now recalls that at some point her counsel secured additional funding from a nonprofit organization to offset certain expenses and legal fees."

Mr. Trump's lawyers wrote to Judge Lewis Kaplan that the revelation raised "concerns as to plaintiff's bias and motive" for the lawsuit, but Judge Kaplan let the trial proceed and ruled her revelation about Mr. Hoffman's funding did not impact the case.

No laws prohibit legal donations like the one provided by Mr. Hoffman. But lying under oath in a court case can result in a federal perjury conviction that carries a sentence of up to five years in prison, said Will Chamberlain, senior legal counsel at the Article III Project, a conservative legal watchdog group.

"This is just the beginning of the investigation. I'm sure they're going to go through all her statements, both in deposition and that trial, with a fine-tooth comb, because her allegations were really pretty implausible, and figure out if they think they can prove that she lied anywhere else," Mr. Chamberlain said.

The source familiar with the [Justice Department](#) investigation said the probe “is very fluid” and could, at some point, focus on Ms. Carroll’s statements under oath and whether she committed perjury. The source did not provide further details about the investigation, other than that the scope is focused on Mr. Hoffman’s nonprofit.

The Washington Times reached out to Ms. Carroll’s legal team and Mr. Hoffman for this article.

Ms. Carroll first accused Mr. Trump of sexually assaulting her in 2019 in a New York Magazine article entitled: “Hideous Men — A list of the most revolting scoundrels I have ever met, including the leader of the free world.”

Her decision to sue the president came at the urging of staunch Trump foe George Conway, a lawyer and the ex-husband of GOP pollster and former Trump campaign and White House aide Kellyanne Conway.

Democrat-led New York legislature enabled the lawsuit to proceed, voting in 2022 to create a year-long “lookback window,” allowing adult survivors of sexual abuse to sue their attackers beyond the one-year statute of limitations.

Critics of the lawsuit picked apart Ms. Carroll’s accusation, noting her faulty memory of the incident and when it occurred, the lack of witnesses, security footage or physical evidence, and her own social media posts. In 2012, for example, she called herself a “massive” fan of Mr. Trump’s reality television show, “The Apprentice.”

Mr. Trump denies knowing or meeting Ms. Carroll and does not recall a photo taken decades ago in which he’s seen standing near Ms. Carroll and her then-husband.

Congressional Democrats, including those who cheered on the four federal criminal cases waged against Mr. Trump under the Biden administration, condemned the [Justice Department](#) investigation.

Sen. Adam Schiff, California Democrat, said the president “is using the power of the DOJ to go after his own victims. It’s a vile attack on the rule of law and a disgusting insult to victims everywhere.”