

Trump's Plans for a Second Term Are So Bad That They Almost Make the First One Look Good

By [Bess Levin](#) September 28, 2023

Given how the first one went, you can probably guess why that's a bad thing.

MAGA supporters hold a vehicle rally and hold up Donald Frump flags in front of Trump Tower in NYC on September 17, 2023. By Mark Peterson/Redux.

In a reasonable society, an ex-president who's been indicted [a whopping four times](#) on a total of 91 felony counts—with charges ranging from [obstruction of justice](#) to [conspiracy to defraud the United States](#)—would not have a snowball's chance in hell of ever being president again. It simply would not be a thing, full stop. You try to overturn the results of a free and fair election, or ask state officials things like “[Just say that the election was corrupt, and leave the rest to me,](#)” and you don't get to be president again!

Obviously, though, we very much do not live in a reasonable society; we live in one in which **Donald Trump** is beating the next closest contender for the GOP nomination by a [logic-](#)

[defying 43 points](#). And one in which a guy who allegedly [stored classified government documents next to the toilet](#)—right there, where experts say they were [potentially getting sprayed with shit particles](#)!—and allegedly tried to “[delete](#)” Mar-a-Lago security camera footage requested by the Justice Department, is [edging out](#) the guy who did neither of those things in a general election matchup.

All of this means that Donald Trump has significantly better than a snowball’s chance in hell of getting reelected, and anyone who lived through his first term knows why that’s a legitimately terrifying prospect. But, of course, a second term for Trump wouldn’t be simply a repeat of the last time around when it comes to how many times a day you’d find yourself asking, “Oh, God what did he do now?” No, a second term for Trump would be so, so much worse.

The following is just a small sampling of why:

Career civil servants are out, die-hard loyalists are in

Shortly before the 2020 election, Trump [signed](#) an executive order known as Schedule F, allowing his administration to gut employment protections for thousands of career federal employees whose jobs—which range from making sure the air is clean to ensuring food and drugs are safe—are not supposed to be subject to the whims of whomever is in the White House at the time. Stripped of such protections, the

move would have given Trump the power to fire whoever he wanted, and replace them with individuals whose chief qualifications were unflagging loyalty. Trump, of course, was not able to stick around to see this plan out, and after **Joe Biden** was inaugurated, he canceled Trump's executive order. But, with a possible second term on the horizon, Trump and his allies have made it clearer than ever that they would pick up exactly where they left off.

Last year, Axios [reported](#) that Trump-aligned conservative groups had been working on vetting potential Trump administration employees, and that sources close to the ex-president "anticipate needing an alternate labor force of unprecedented scale—of perhaps as many as 10,000 vetted personnel—to give them the capacity to quickly replace 'obstructionist' government officials with people committed to Trump and his 'America First' agenda." In an interview, Trump ally **Jim Jordan** told [Axios](#) that he had discussed the prospect of en-masse firings with another individual close to the ex-president and that "the line that we talked about was, 'Fire everyone you're allowed to fire. And [then] fire a few people you're not supposed to, so that they have to sue you and you send the message.' That's the way to do it." In June, making it clear that all of this is about retribution and not, y'know, who the best person for the job is, Trump [declared](#) in a speech in Michigan: "With you at my side, we will demolish the deep state. We will expel the warmongers from our

government. We will drive out the globalists. We will cast out the Communists, Marxists, and Fascists, and we will throw off the sick political class that hates our country...We will liberate America from these villains once and for all."

As conservative **Geoffrey Kabaservice**, a conservative who wrote the book *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party*, [told](#) Politico, Schedule F is "an attempt to eviscerate government and replace it with Trump stooges."

No restraints on Trump's worst impulses

As the *Los Angeles Times* [noted](#) this month, "In his first term, Trump initially surrounded himself with aides who sought to temper his impulses: White House Chief of Staff **John F. Kelly**, Defense Secretary **James N. Mattis**—even, occasionally, Atty. Gen. **Jeff Sessions**. Those moderating influences are gone...In 2017, Trump arrived in the White House unprepared, with no clear idea of how to force the federal bureaucracy to turn his whims into action. If he wins this time, he'll bring a team of loyal aides who have been planning their return to power for months, and who intend to start by purging bureaucrats who stand in their way."

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In other words, the administration will not only be ready to implement its horrifying plans from the get-go; it will have a cabinet ready and willing to do it. As Axios [reported](#) last summer, longtime Trump adviser **Stephen Miller** has been hard at work "identifying and assembling" a list of general counsels "who will aggressively implement Trump's orders and skeptically interrogate any career government attorney who tells them their plans are unlawful or cannot be done." (Which is another way of saying apparently he's looking for people who will help Trump break the law.)

Another war on immigrants

Trump has [vowed](#) to "carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American History." He's [said](#) he'll expand his travel ban, which barred people from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the US; send thousands of troops to the US-Mexico border; and [sign](#) an executive order "on Day One" to end birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants. "For those passionate about securing our immigration system...the first 100 days of the Trump administration will be pure bliss—followed by another four years of the most hard-hitting action conceivable," Miller, the architect of Trump's family-separation policy, [told](#) Axios.

Speaking of Miller and family separation, during a town hall with CNN in May, Trump refused to [rule out](#) the possibility of bringing back the barbaric practice. During Trump's time in office, [thousands](#) of children, including infants, were ripped from their parents with no process in place for reuniting them. In February, the Department of Homeland Security said nearly 1,000 children separated at the border years prior had [yet to be reunited](#) with their parents.

Meanwhile, Trump is reportedly planning to go after not just illegal immigration but [legal immigration as well](#) ([just as he did in his first term](#)). Oh, and top of the humanitarian impact, [Forbes](#) notes that Trump's immigration policies "will likely decimate long-term US economic growth."

Speaking of the economy...

In August, Trump [announced](#) that should he win a second term, he'll "automatically" slap a 10 percent tariff on virtually all foreign goods coming into the country—an idea economists on both sides of the aisle criticized, with **Adam Posen**, president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, [calling](#) the proposal "lunacy." Why isn't the plan winning many fans? For one thing, experts say it would put millions out of work. For another, tariffs disproportionately hurt lower-income households, i.e., the group the ex-president is supposedly all about looking out for.

"A tariff of that scope and size would impose a massive tax on the folks who it intends to help," **Paul Winfree**—who served as Trump's deputy director of the Domestic Policy Council and is currently the president of a center-right think tank—[told](#) *The Washington Post* last month. "It would be a disaster for the US economy," added **Michael Strain**, an economist at the center-right think tank the American Enterprise Institute. "It would raise prices for consumers and be met with considerable retaliation from other nations, which would raise the costs facing US businesses. It would reduce employment among manufacturing workers. It would be very, very bad."

If that's not enough, the *Post* [reported](#) in September that the ex-president's economic team is "plotting an aggressive new set of tax cuts to push on the campaign trail and from the Oval Office if he wins a second term," with the focus currently on the corporate tax rate, which Team Trump apparently thinks is just too damn high. (As a reminder, the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act [lowered](#) the top corporate rate from 35 percent to 21 percent.) "The idea I've been talking about with Trump is: Why don't we go to 15% corporate rate, get rid of the credits and deductions, and just make it 15%," **Stephen Moore**—whose short-lived nomination by Trump to the Federal Reserve Board was [dubbed](#) "truly appalling"—told the *Post*. "That's one of the ideas that's being tossed around." Responding to the news that Trump and company

think companies like, say, Amazon, need to pay even less in taxes, White House spokesperson **Andrew Bates** [told](#) The Messenger that the plan in question would “turn back the clock to the trickle-down economics that hollowed out the American middle class and added trillions to the national debt.”

“You know we’re not supposed to do that”

“I will send in the National Guard until law and order is restored. You know we’re not supposed to do that,” is a real thing Trump [said](#) at CPAC in March, while speaking about crime in cities, adding, “Frankly, the federal government should take over control and management of Washington, DC. I wouldn’t even call the mayor.” In a video released in July, he [announced](#) that he would require police departments across the country to implement “stop-and-frisk,” i.e., the NYPD practice of detaining and searching civilians that [disproportionately impacts](#) people of color and was [ruled unconstitutional](#) in 2013 by a federal judge.

January 6 pardons

Trump has [said](#) that he will pardon a “large portion” of the people convicted of federal crimes following their participation in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, and that many will receive an “[apology](#).” As a reminder, the insurrection left multiple people dead and

approximately 140 members of law enforcement injured as a result of being attacked with bats, flagpoles, stun guns, and pepper spray.

Education

Trump has [said](#) he wants to get rid of the Department of Education and have states "run the education of our children." Not surprisingly, he's claimed he'll [cut federal funding](#) for schools that teach critical race theory or what he calls "transgender insanity." He's also [said](#) he'll bring back his "1776 Commission," which was notably devoid of any actual professional historians, to promote a "patriotic" curriculum. And, naturally, he wants parents to be able to fire principals. "What Trump is trying to resurrect is something that was thoroughly discredited by the professional historical community in a totally apolitical context," **James Grossman**, executive director of the American Historical Association, told *The Washington Post*. "There's lots of places to look and see what happens when history education gets stripped of its professional integrity in the interest of a political party."

Going after transgender care

Trump has [threatened](#) to punish doctors and hospitals who provide gender-affirming health care to minors, and said he'll ask Congress to pass a nationwide law barring the practice in "all 50 states." He's also vowed to sign a federal law that

would only recognize two genders, and would ban transgender women from participating in women's sports.

Sorry, Ukraine

It's not entirely clear how a potential Trump reelection would impact Russia's war in Ukraine, but it would presumably not be good, given his [deep and abiding admiration for Vladimir Putin](#). And the fact that he [refused](#) to commit to backing Ukraine during his CNN town hall in May.

Abortion rights are on the line (again)

It's also not entirely clear what Trump would do on abortion in a second term but just because he's seemingly less antiabortion than, say, [Ron DeSantis](#), does not mean he is not a direct threat to reproductive rights. For one thing, he not only set the wheels in motion [for Roe v. Wade to be overturned](#), he [brags about having done so all the time](#). For another, he's suggested he'd [restrict abortion at the federal level](#), and given his contributions to rolling the clock back some 50 years so far, we should obviously take that threat seriously.

Burning the planet in a shallow grave

As Politico [reported](#) in July, conservative operatives have written a climate plan for Trump that "would block the expansion of the electrical grid for wind and solar energy;

slash funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice office; shutter the Energy Department's renewable energy offices; prevent states from adopting California's car pollution standards; and delegate more regulation of polluting industries to Republican state officials." As a former EPA official [told](#) *Newsweek*, "I would expect as in his past term that any impediment to unbridled profit would be obliterated."

Revenge prosecutions

After he was indicted over his handling of classified documents, Trump [wrote](#) on Truth Social in all caps: "I will appoint a real special 'prosecutor' to go after the most corrupt president in the history of the USA, Joe Biden, the entire Biden crime family, & all others involved with the destruction of our elections, borders, & country itself!" A few months later, he was asked, "If you're president again, will you lock people up?" He responded: "The answer is you have no choice because they're doing it to us."

X content

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And former Justice Department officials [fear](#) he actually will! Speaking to *New York* magazine, one former DOJ official

[said](#): "During the first administration, the president talked a lot about pursuing political enemies. He spoke about it during the campaign, he spoke about it while he was president, but the Justice Department did not act on it.... My concern is in a second term. I think the president would be very focused on finding people who would act on his desire to retaliate against political opponents." While Trump and his allies frequently claim the government has been "weaponized," if he actually followed through on his threats, it would, as the *Los Angeles Times* [put it](#), "represent a politicization of the Justice Department unmatched since the Watergate scandal half a century ago."

As former Obama campaign strategist **David Axelrod** [said](#) earlier this month: "Trump 2.0 would be the Delta variant of democracy. It would be a thousand times more virulent and harder to control."

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