

Written by Kathy

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By Kathy Wray Coleman, associate publisher, editor-in-chief

NEW YORK, NEW, York-Following a visit on Feb 22 by former president Donald Trump to the East Palestine, Ohio town where on Feb 3 a Norfolk Southern train carrying toxic chemicals derailed causing a massive explosion and generating international news and calls for environmental reforms and more rail safety countrywide, the country embraces this week for a possible indictment and arrest of the controversial public figure and real estate mogul.

Trump publicly announced last week that he expects to be indicted by a New York grand jury on Tuesday and subsequently arrested for what prosecutors say was illegal campaign hush money handed in 2016 to American pornographic film actress Stormy Daniels, whom the president is accused of carrying on an illicit affair at one time or another, an alleged affair that he outright denies. He had called for protests in response to the anticipated indictment but that call for action has largely fallen on death ears, raising questions about whether he still has the power to mobilize far-right supporters the way he did more than two years ago before the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. That unprecedented insurrection left several people injured and five people dead, including a Capitol police officer.

Convictions and long prison sentences of some of the Capitol rioters may have scared off potential protesters, sources say, not to mention the fear of governmental reprisal. Nonetheless, the controversy continues and the former president's freedom is now at risk. Trump and his supporters say the potential indictment is politically motivated while his critics say it is long over due as are potential criminal charges in other legal venues involving the embattled former president. the star witness testifying before the grand jury relative to the New York case at issue was Trump's former attorney, Michael Cohen.

Trump's visit in February to the train derailment site in East Palestine, one of two high profile train derailments in under two months in Ohio by Norfolk Southern, was somewhat political as he was joined by East Palestine Mayor Trent Conaway, J.D. Vance, who is a U.S. senator from Ohio who won a hard fought campaign for his seat last November with the former president's support, Ohio state Sen. Michael Rulli and state Rep. Monica Robb Blasdel. But will prominent Ohio politicians like Vance, Gov Mike DeWine, Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost endorse his candidacy for president if he is indicted?

Ohio was once a pivotal state for presidential elections that Barack Obama won in 2008 and again in 2012 when he was reelected. Trump, however, won Ohio in 2016 over then Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, and in 2020 when President Joe Biden a former vice

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president under Obama, ousted him from the White House. Republicans hold each and every statewide office in Ohio and all but three seats on the seven-member largely Republican Ohio Supreme Court.

When he spoke last month to a small group of local leaders, first responders and the media at the local fire station near East Palestine, a small village of some 4,700 working class residents, he was speaking in large part to his political base, mainly those who supported him for president.

"We're in East Palestine to show our love for our fellow Americans," Trump told the crowd as he criticized Biden for what he said was an an inept federal response to the train derailment disaster that has residents up in arms via fears of air intoxication that have caused evacuations. He added that "they were doing nothing for you. When they announced I was coming they changed their tune."

President Biden has yet to visit the Ohio town to calm residents fears, though he has promised to visit sometime soon. Trump says that his visit is a reason the White House is now responding to East Palestine residents regarding the train derailment catastrophe that the Environmental Protection Agency says poses no serious harm and that renowned environmental activists like Erin Brokovich, who also visited East Palestine, say is a problem environmentally and with respect to clean and safe drinking water

"Clean water my ass," said Brokovich to reporters.

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