

US states can punish 'faithless electors'

● **The Electoral College, a peculiarly American institution, is comprised of 538 electors**

Washington

The Supreme Court ruled yesterday that US states have the right to remove and punish members of the Electoral College for not backing the presidential candidate whom they pledged to support.

The unanimous ruling, which comes ahead of November's election between President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden, allows states to use measures to bind Electoral College members to their com-



Donald Trump won a clear majority of the Electoral College to defeat Hillary Clinton and secure the US presidency in 2016

mitments, essentially preventing them from going against the will of a state's voting majority. The Electoral College, a pe-

culiarly American institution, is comprised of 538 electors who translate the popular vote by casting their ballots in favor of the candidate who gets the most votes in each state.

Advocates of faithless electors argued that since the Constitution makes no mention of the issue, states should not be allowed to fine or remove electors who do not remain true to their commitments.

But all nine Supreme Court justices concluded that states can assure that their electors "have no ground for reversing the vote of millions of its citizens."

"That direction accords with the Constitution -- as well as with the trust of a nation that here, We the People rule," they wrote, invoking the opening

words of the US Constitution.

In 2016, seven of the 535 electors cast votes at odds with the popular-vote winners, including five who declined to cast votes for Hillary Clinton even though she won the vote in the states of those electors. Two declined to vote for Trump.

Faithless electors have never upended an election result, but Justice Brett Kavanaugh said in May arguments that the court had "to look forward ... and worry about chaos."

Fifteen states already have laws that allow sanction of faithless electors, including his or her immediate removal and replacement with an alternate whose vote the state reports instead.

A few states impose monetary fines on electors who flout their pledge.



Historically, so-called faithless electors have been rare. During the presidential elections organized from 1796 to 2016, only 180 electors have voted contrary to their pledge, according to a document admitted to the court.

Russian journalist avoids jail but given huge fine in 'terror' case

Pskov | Russia

A Russian journalist avoided a prison sentence yesterday but was given a \$7,000 fine for "justifying terrorism" in a controversial case that sparked an outcry at home and abroad.

Svetlana Prokopyeva, who is based in the northwestern city of Pskov, was charged with publicly justifying terrorism over a column she wrote about a bombing attack that targeted the FSB security service in the north of the country in 2018.

The 40-year-old walked out of a Pskov courtroom a free woman after the judge found her guilty and ordered her to pay a fine of 500,000 rubles (\$6,950).

Prokopyeva works for the Russian service of the US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) as a freelance contributor.

Prosecutors had asked the judge to jail Prokopyeva for six years and ban her from working in journalism for four years on the charges that carry a maximum sentence of seven years.

As the judge read out the verdict, supporters in the courtroom -- many of whom had arrived from Moscow -- shouted "shame" and "she is not guilty."

Standing on the steps of the court building holding a large bouquet of flowers, Prokopye-



Svetlana Prokopyeva, who is based in the northwestern city of Pskov, was charged with publicly justifying terrorism

va thanked her allies for their support and vowed to appeal the decision.

"The biggest success is that I was not forbidden from working in my profession," she told the crowd, sporting a T-shirt that said "We will not shut up."

Yulia Galyamina, a Moscow deputy in the opposition Yabloko party who described the verdict as "unfair," tweeted that 10 percent of Prokopyeva's fine was already collected outside the courtroom.

The journalist's case has its origins in a November 2018

bombing carried out by a 17-year-old anarchist who blew himself up in a Federal Security Service (FSB) building in Arkhangelsk in northern Russia. In her commentary, published by the Pskov affiliate of the Echo of Moscow radio station, Prokopyeva linked the teenager's suicide bombing to the political climate under President Vladimir Putin.

The journalist said she was freed thanks to public pressure.

In a statement published by the Memorial rights group, dozens of human rights defenders denounced the case as "openly political" with the goal of "intimidating Russian journalists".

"A journalist is entitled to freely spread information not only on events but also on ideas," they said.

International press advocacy group Reporters Without Borders said it was "relieved" by the ruling and welcomed "the mobilisation in support of the

journalist". Human Rights Watch said the ruling "creates another dangerous precedent, with a journalist found guilty of a terrorism offence for normal journalistic work".

"The authorities should immediately and unconditionally vacate her politically motivated conviction," the watchdog said.



An activist demands 'Freedom for Svetlana'

Regeneron COVID-19 treatment enters final stage trials

Washington

The pharmaceutical firm Regeneron yesterday announced it was entering the late stages of its human clinical trials investigating a drug to both treat and prevent COVID-19.

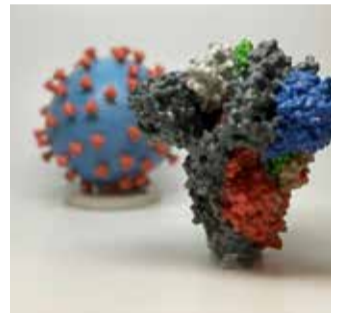
The drug, called REGN-COV2, is a combination of two antibodies that block the coronavirus' "spike protein" which it uses to invade human cells.

The company is moving to the final Phase 3 stage of a trial to determine if its drug can prevent infection among people recently exposed to the virus -- for example through a person in their household.

This trial, run jointly with the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), is expected to enroll 2,000 patients in the US.

"We are pleased to collaborate with NIAID to study REGN-COV2 in our quest to further prevent the spread of the virus with an antiviral antibody cocktail that could be available much sooner than a vaccine," said Regeneron President George Yancopoulos.

At the same time, Regeneron announced it was moving to the final stages of a trial to determine the drug cocktail's



ability to treat both hospitalized and non-hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

This will involve around 1,850 hospitalized and 1,050 non-hospitalized patients in the US, Brazil, Mexico and Chile, with preliminary data expected later this summer.

Regeneron scientists evaluated thousands of antibodies harvested from genetically modified mice and from humans, identifying the two they found to be most potent against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, while not competing against each other.

The company uses a multi-antibody strategy to decrease the chances that the virus will mutate in order to evade the blocking action of a single antibody, an approach it detailed in a recent study in Science.

Trump's niece to release memoir on July 14

● **In her 240-page book, Mary Trump dubs America's leader "the world's most dangerous man."**

New York

Donald Trump's niece will release her unflattering book on the US president on July 14, her publisher announced Monday, after a judge lifted a temporary ban on publication.

Simon & Schuster has brought forward the release of the memoir by two weeks, according to an update on its website.

In her 240-page book, Mary Trump dubs America's leader "the world's most dangerous man."

It is set to be the latest bombshell book to dish dirt on Trump after former aide John Bolton's

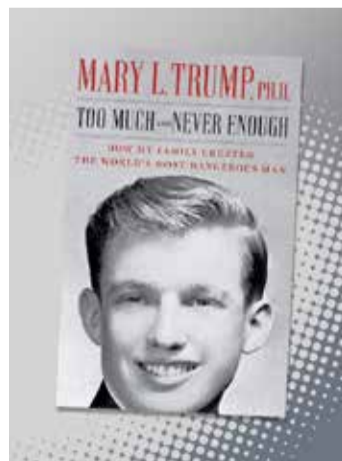


Donald Trump

tome, which describes Trump as corrupt and incompetent, hit shelves last month.

Last Wednesday, an appeals court judge in New York ruled that Simon & Schuster is allowed to release Mary Trump's book "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man."

The president's brother Robert Trump had asked for the restraining order, arguing that Mary was violating a non-disclosure agreement signed in 2001 after the settlement over the estate of Fred Trump -- the father of Donald and Robert and of Mary's father Fred Trump Jr. Judge Alan Scheinkman post-



Simon & Schuster is allowed to release Mary Trump's book

poned addressing whether the author had violated the agreement preventing her from revealing family secrets by writing the book. A hearing on that matter could take place this Friday.

Nevertheless Simon & Schuster "is not a party to the agreement," so the block of their pub-



lication of the book "is vacated," the judge ruled.

In the book, Mary, a clinical psychologist, recounts what she witnessed of the "toxic family" in the home of her grandparents, according to her publisher.

"She describes a nightmare of traumas, destructive relationships, and a tragic combination

of neglect and abuse," Simon & Schuster says in a blurb about the book.

The Daily Beast has reported it will reveal that Mary Trump was the crucial source for explosive New York Times reporting on Trump's finances, which suggested the billionaire paid little in tax for decades.

In late June, a judge refused to block the release of Bolton's book, titled "The Room Where It Happened," saying it was too late for the restraining order sought by the Trump administration.

Trump has characterized the portrait of 17 months up close with the leader, until Bolton was fired in September, as "fiction."

"She describes a nightmare of traumas, destructive relationships, and a tragic combination of neglect and abuse," Simon & Schuster says in a blurb about the book.