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In a historic and unprecedented decision, former President Donald Trump was convicted by a Manhattan jury on Thursday for 34 counts of falsifying business records. The charges stem from allegations that Trump orchestrated hush money payments to adult film star Stormy Daniels during his 2016 presidential campaign to conceal allegations of an affair.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg argued that Trump falsified records to cover up violations of election law. Legal experts suggest the case could take years to resolve through appeals, potentially leaving Trump a convicted felon as he seeks the Republican nomination for the 2024 presidential election.

Trump's conviction marked the first time a former U.S. president has been declared a felon. Despite the ruling, Trump confirmed plans to appeal and indicated that he would continue his presidential campaign regardless of the outcome. His lawyer, Alina Habba, emphasized that not even a jail sentence would deter him from running for office. Trump’s sentencing is scheduled for July 11, just before the Republican National Convention.

The verdict has polarized public opinion and intensified political divisions. A new poll revealed that 49% of independent voters and 15% of Republicans believe Trump should suspend his campaign. However, his support base remains robust, with significant donations pouring into his campaign following the conviction.

President Joe Biden has criticized Trump’s assertion that the trial was politically motivated, reiterating that the case was handled by state-level authorities. Trump’s conviction has also sparked calls for violence online among some of his supporters, highlighting the deep fractures within American political discourse.