

Meet The Atty Defending Trump In The Jan. 6 Case

By **Jack Karp**

Law360 (August 3, 2023, 4:56 PM EDT) -- The Florida defense attorney representing former President Donald Trump against federal charges stemming from his attempts to undo the results of the 2020 presidential election is respected, methodical and understated, according to lawyers who know him, one of whom is surprised to see him representing Trump.

John F. Lauro entered his initial appearance as Trump's defense counsel in Washington, D.C., federal court on Thursday shortly before Trump was arraigned on **felony charges** that include conspiracy to defraud the United States, obstructing an official proceeding and conspiracy to violate civil rights, all stemming from the former president's purported effort to remain in the White House despite losing reelection.

Lauro's low-key demeanor is a marked change from some of Trump's more voluble defenders, attorneys say.

"My experience of him in the courtroom is that he is firm but soft-spoken," Stanley J. Reed, a principal at Lerch Early & Brewer Chtd. who has worked with Lauro on a case, told Law360 Pulse.

"He's a very personable fellow. I mean, unless he's under orders from Trump, you know, he's a very easygoing, nice guy," said Brad Simon, a partner at Schlam Stone & Dolan LLP who worked with Lauro when both were federal prosecutors for the Eastern District of New York.

That's why Simon is surprised to see Lauro taking on Trump's case, he said.

"I think he's a responsible lawyer, but it's never easy working for Trump, because Trump doesn't want to listen to his lawyers," said Simon.

Lauro, who is being joined on Trump's defense team by **attorney Todd Blanche**, has been less than easygoing when defending Trump in the media, however.

He's called the indictment of Trump the first time in U.S. history that political speech has been criminalized and said the country is now in a "constitutional abyss" in several television interviews.

Lauro is a principal at Lauro & Singer, the firm he founded in 1994 as The Lauro Law Firm, with offices in Tampa, Miami and New York City. He largely handles white collar criminal cases involving accounting, securities, conspiracy and health care, as well as commercial litigation, according to his firm bio.

"He's an excellent attorney. I think he's very well-prepared, I think he's very effective and does a great job," said Todd Foster, a partner at Todd Foster Law Group in Tampa who has worked with Lauro while in private practice and against him when Foster was a federal prosecutor.

Foster said he's been impressed by Lauro's thoroughness and demeanor.

"He's low-key. He's not one of these people who is going to yell or stomp around," Foster said. "He is more methodical and low-key. He just keeps on task and makes his points and does his job."

Trump's indictment isn't the first high-profile criminal case Lauro has handled.



John Lauro

He represented former National Basketball Association referee Tim Donaghy, who was investigated for gambling on games he officiated, a case that landed Donaghy in prison and sparked a Netflix documentary.

Lauro also represented Pasco County, Florida, Commissioner Jack Mariano when he was investigated over a \$600,000 anonymous donation for a county-owned park that was connected to Mariano's purchase of vacant Gulf-front property slated for a condominium development.

Other criminal cases Lauro has handled include defending WellCare Health Plans Inc.'s former chief financial officer against **charges of health care fraud**, and the CEO of two telemedicine companies when he **inked a plea deal** with federal prosecutors who accused him of helping operate a \$1.2 billion telehealth scam.

"He's an outstanding lawyer," said Lerch Early's Reed, who worked with Lauro on the WellCare case. "He's really smart, he's very intuitive."

Lauro has handled civil cases, as well.

He represented the former chief medical officer of a Florida-based practice management company in a False Claims Act case over allegations that the company overbilled federal health care programs for unnecessary drug testing and services, a case that was **settled for \$24.5 million**.

Lauro also represented an international charity in a legal fight over the purchase of an artwork by Edgar Degas, won a verdict of more than \$1 million against an airline in a case involving a passenger who was injured during a forced landing, and scored an injunction under the Lanham Act against a national jewelry manufacturer's competitor for unfair and deceptive trade practices, according to his firm bio.

Before going into private practice, Lauro spent two years as a federal prosecutor in the criminal division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, the same U.S. attorney's office where special counsel Jack Smith — who Lauro will now face in court — later worked, though the two lawyers' stints in that office did not overlap.

While at the U.S. Department of Justice, Lauro was a member of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and prosecuted international drug conspiracy cases, according to his firm bio.

He was the lead prosecutor in a case against a New York City car theft ring and a member of the prosecution team that investigated defense contractor fraud at the Pentagon, his bio says.

"He's no John Eastman," said the former prosecutor Simon, referring to one of the more controversial and outspoken attorneys in Trump's orbit.

Lauro has appeared as a legal contributor on Fox News, ABC News and MSNBC, according to his firm bio.

Before joining the DOJ, Lauro worked at Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, according to his firm bio.

He earned his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center, where he was an editor on the Georgetown Law Journal, his bio adds.

Lauro did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

--Additional reporting by Hannah Albarazi, Gina Kim and Carolina Bolado. Editing by Kelly Duncan and Nicole Bleier.