

Gearing Up for 'Biden' Versus Trump: Not If, But When and How to Replace Biden



by Victor Davis Hanson

President Joe Biden is declining at a geometric, not an arithmetic, rate. His cognitive challenges are multifaceted.

His gait is shaky. His daily use of stairs now risks the chance of a tenure-ending fall. Even when he sticks to the teleprompter, he so slurs his speech, mispronounces words, and glides his syntax that at times he becomes as incomprehensible at the podium as he is unsteady in his step.

He now speaks a strange language foreign and untranslatable to most Americans. White House transcribers leave hiatuses in their written texts of his remarks to reflect that they either have no idea what he said, do not wish to publicize their guesses at what he said, or do not wish the public to know what he was trying to say.

Despite the circling-the-wagons media and the passive-aggressive sycophants like the opportunistic Gov. Gavin Newsom in waiting, the left understands that Biden will be lucky to get to the August convention. This spring and early summer, he will not campaign as a normal presidential candidate, and this time around, there is no pretense of the COVID epidemic to excuse his absence.

The people have already polled numerous times that their president is unfit to serve now and, in the future, should not run. So the 2020 Faustian bargain is in shambles. Remember its quid pro quos: all the major Democratic presidential candidates of 2020 nearly simultaneously pulled out the primaries to coronate Biden—but only on the condition that Biden would play to the hilt his “ol’ Joe Biden from Scranton” schtick that would offer a veneer to the otherwise unpopular hard left agenda of the new Bernie Sanders/Elizabeth Warren/the Obamas/Squad Democratic Party.

The people voted for a “return to normalcy,” all while the left destroyed the southern border, unleashed a critical legal theory/George-Soros crime wave, dismantled hard-won deterrence abroad, and printed money to spur hyperinflation.

Moreover, it is increasingly clear that the entire Biden family consortium is compromised and corrupt. Neither Hunter nor Jim nor Frank Biden had any consulting skills, business expertise, or corporate experience to warrant leveraging over \$25 million from foreign interests. Their only commodity was to sell corrupt parties the appearance that Joe Biden would be quite willing to help their various causes if they enriched his family. Everyone knows that to be true, and only now, as Biden sinks into incoherence, are his protectors shrugging about the obvious money-making schemes that revolved around a corrupt senator, vice president, and private citizen, Joe Biden.

None of Biden’s record is popular. His policies on the border,

economy, energy, foreign policy, and crime poll below 50 percent. And this trifecta of Biden's mental deterioration, family corruption, and failed presidential record will only grow worse.

Then there is the Kamala Harris issue—the Spiro Agnew insurance policy of our age that so far has protected Biden from overt efforts to replace him. She is as unpopular as Biden and often as incomprehensible, but without the excuse of age or mental diminishment. Of all the major Beltway elected officials, only Sen. Mitch McConnell polls worse.

By August, Democratic donors and politicians may well conclude that the only way to rid the party of both is to release Biden's delegates, open up the convention, and let candidates fight over the now-free delegates. Harris then will not be nominated, but not through a backroom, Machiavellian removal of a black woman. Instead, she will “fairly” lose an “open” and “transparent” free-for-all of various Democratic want-to-be replacements and recede into a sober and judicious Mike Pence-like retirement.

The problem with this scenario, of course, is that late-season convention or post-convention machinations in the modern era don't work out too well. In 1976, Ronald Reagan, after losing a series of early primaries and being declared nearly inert, suddenly caught fire and entered the August 1976 Republican convention in Kansas City within striking distance of incumbent Gerald Ford. President Ford, remember, had never been elected either president or vice president.

In the end, in one of the most acrimonious Republican conventions in memory, a wounded Ford won the nomination by only 117 delegate votes out of some 2,257 cast. In some sense, Ford never recovered and lost the election to Jimmy Carter, even as the tumult gave Reagan the exposure and his team the experience needed to win the nomination in 1980.

About two weeks after the 1972 Democratic convention, a desperate George McGovern and the Democratic hierarchy removed Vice President running mate Sen. Thomas Eagleton from the ticket due to revelations of little-known past electric shock treatments given to combat depression. After futile efforts, the Democrats settled on the Kennedy clan's Sargent Shriver, who had never run for office. McGovern would have lost anyway to an incumbent Nixon. But the margin of defeat in one of the greatest landslides in presidential history was often attributable to the sheer chaos of changing a vice presidential candidate so late in the campaign.

In sum, the Democrats can—and may have to—replace Joe Biden, and they can ensure that Kamala Harris is not the nominee, but the means of doing so will be chaotic and messy and will wound the winner for the rest of the campaign.

Trump's Circuitous Path to Victory

Donald Trump challenges have now been discussed ad nauseam, and they are threefold: he must either beat or postpone campaign-season court trials—and find perhaps \$800 million to \$1 billion to post bonds, pay interests on them, and meet gargantuan legal fees—without turning off donors and supporters and by avoiding the diversion of Republican National Committee and various campaign funds to his own personal defense.

As in the past, Trump will be vastly outspent, perhaps by 3-1 or 4-1. Molly Ball's infamous *Time* 2022 essay outlined the left-wing scheming that ensured a mail-in/early balloting election by aggregating the deep state, the corporate boardroom, the social media monopolies, and the 2020 riotous street thugs of Antifa and BLM. What she called a "cabal" and "conspiracy" was designed not so much as a one-off to defeat Trump as to create a permanent system by which a Trump-like candidate could never win a presidential election, both in 2020 and afterward.

Given changes in the 2020 state voting laws that saw 60-70 percent of the ballots in many swing states not cast on Election Day, while the rejection rate of faulty ballots counter-intuitively plunged despite such an influx, Trump will have to win by 3–4 points. Otherwise, in the swing states, we will again stare at the late-evening televised wizardry in which his huge leads mysteriously melt on the screen as drop boxes and mail sacks are tallied.

To achieve a 51-plus majority in the popular vote—no Republican has achieved such a national ballot margin in 36 years since George H.W. Bush beat Mike Dukakis in 1988—Trump will have to win, or win back, more Independents, apostate Democrats, and RINO Never-Trumpers.

He can do that in only two ways:

One, he must hammer away at Joe Biden's disastrous record on the border, energy, race, foreign affairs, the economy, and social issues that scare moderates and fence-sitters, especially when comparisons are made to the achievements of 2017-2020. Inner-city residents are being tag-teamed by both the influx of thousands of illegal aliens who apparently have first claims on stretched social services and street criminals who loot, assault, and carjack mostly their law-abiding neighbors with impunity.

Two, Trump needs to model his remarks after his Iowa Primary victory speech or his recent Fox Townhall event with Fox's Laura Ingraham. Translated, that means there is no reason to reference Nikki Hayley's deployed husband, to refer to her as a "birdbrain," or to say much of anything other than she will lose, and in the process, she is needlessly hurting more than half of America by draining resources away from the only real chance to repeal the current socialist agenda.

Hayley is imploding without any need for a Trump push. Magnanimity, rather than salt in her self-inflicted wounds, is

the better strategy to unite the party. Trump has cemented his base. He will increase his share of minority voters who have been hurt the worst by the Biden socialist agenda. But to ensure victory and a Republican Congress, he cannot give swing voters a reason not to vote for policies and initiatives that they overwhelmingly prefer over those of the now hard-left Democratic Party.

In sum, after Super Tuesday, when Hayley will either quit the race or become inert, Trump needs to call her, politely remind her of her promise to support the nominee, and welcome her back into the fold. If she is wise, she will likely agree to disagree, let bygones be bygones, and thus pledge to support the assured nominee, Trump.

Two of her three choices are in her own interest: 1) She endorses him, and Trump wins, and she is vibrant in 2028; 2) she endorses him, and Trump loses, and she is still viable; 3) she opposes him, and Trump either wins—and she is *persona non grata*—or he loses, and she is blamed for splitting the party and his defeat. Breaking her public promise to support the nominee will bleed what support she retains, and would prove a suicidal blunder.

Trump has achieved the greatest political comeback since Richard Nixon arose from the ashes of defeat in California in 1962 to win the nomination and presidency in 1968. Trump's Phoenix-like rebirth from January 2021 to the present was achieved by Biden's failure, the natural empathy accruing from the weaponization of the law by partisan or corrupt prosecutors against him, and Trump's greater success in giving independents fewer reasons to vote against him. If he can praise those he defeats, call for unity, and campaign in 50 states in non-Republican strongholds, then he can win—even despite the hatred of the left, the corruption of the media, the weaponization of the bureaucracy, and the eroding trust in the way we vote.

First published in [American Greatness](#).

Response with Tucker Carlson to the SOTU:

<https://t.co/HVFuuH0Vjc>

– Tucker Carlson (@TuckerCarlson) [March 8, 2024](#)